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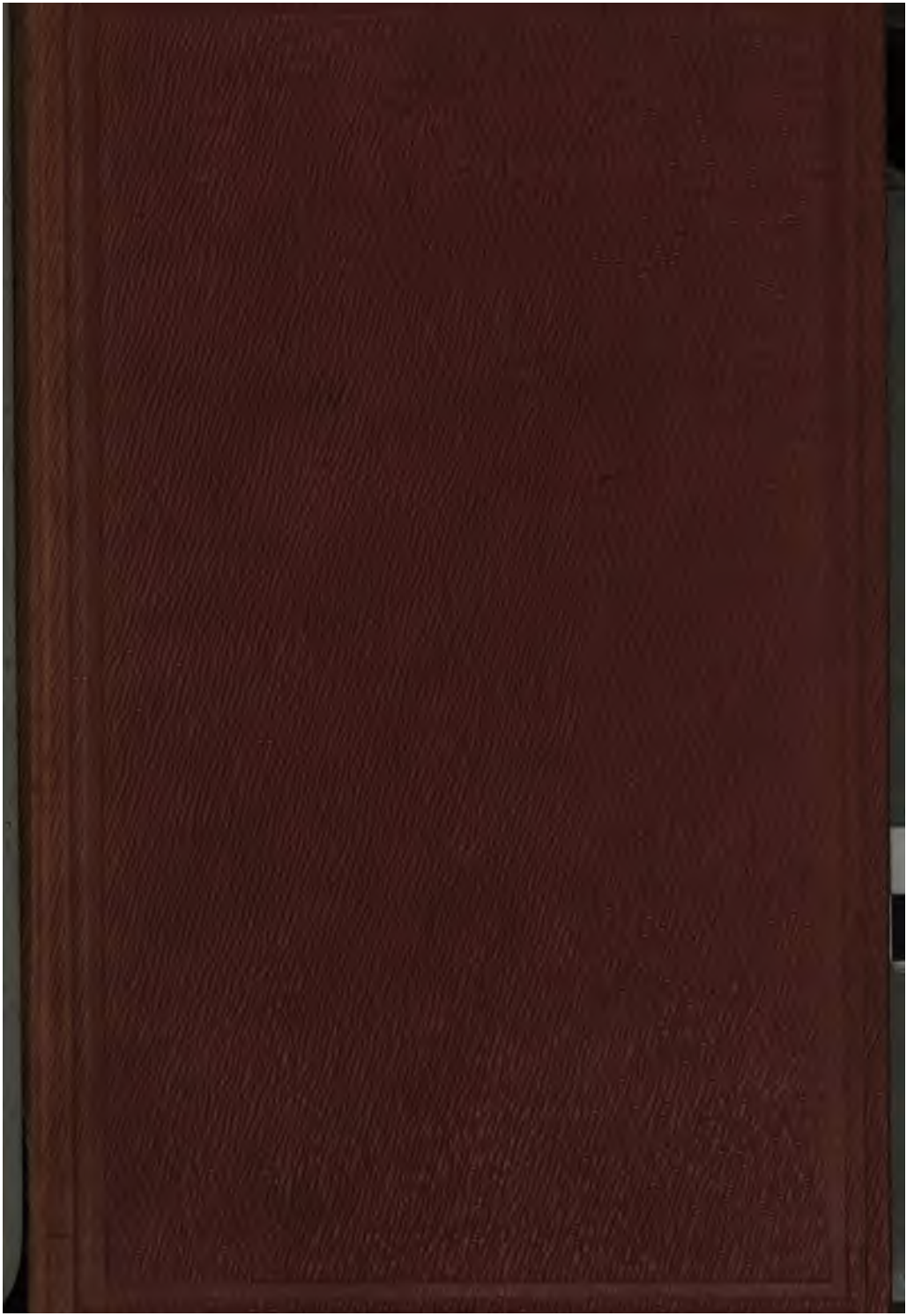

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RUMOUR.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"CHARLES AUCHESTER," "COUNTERPARTS,"

&c. &c.

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad Rumour lies:
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As He pronounces lastly, on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heaven, expect thy meed."

LYCIDAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

THE MARCHIONESS OF HASTINGS

BARONESS GREY DE RUTHYN.

RUMOUR

CHAPTER I.

It was a mid-August evening, warm and cloudless, and very dusty on a certain high road in England, along whose foot-path were pressing two travellers, a woman and a youth.

The way was monotonously bounded on one side by a long wall, enclosing shrubberies pertaining to a retired manufacturer, who had found it very easy to plant trees, but impossible to force from them prematurely the solemn splendours of profound ancestral shades. Lamps at regular distances showed the road onwards straight and unwinding within the sight, and the view across

the road, by daylight a breadth of pasture, deep green or clover-flush, now seemed a purple flat, over which the soft wind wandered, each breath heaving with stolen fragrances, or laden still more heavily with the distant thunder of the train, and the diminished, wailful shriek of its guardian monster.

The wayfarers must have been weary, for before they reached the angle of the wall, they both stopped, and the woman sat down to rest on the bank, which, spotted with scanty grass, half choked with dust, sloped to the dustier road. She said some words to her companion, and he nodded for reply, and then stood on beside her, with his large hat, of a somewhat outlandish form, slouched over his brows, and his right foot beating constantly on the ground.

Presently a watercart—strange spectacle after sunset upon so lone a road—creaked slowly by, scattering its broad stream over the hissing dust. It was scarcely out of sight when a carriage followed it, seen by the light of its own lamps, and whose driver, steeds, and occupants alike received the benefit of the cooled and moistened track. It was going at full speed, and in another instant would have passed the travellers, when its course

was arrested by the youth himself, who stepped into the road, and walked full pace towards the horses; thereby causing the conscientious coachman to pull them up, much more on account of their fresh and timid blood, than for fear of running over a human being in a slouched hat, who had the further audacity to advance to the window as the carriage stopped, and to tap upon the glass, which was up then, but dashed down in another moment.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" enquired a lady, whose spirited tones betrayed not the least alarm, though her only companion was another lady. The youth bowed, or rather nodded, then raised his head which had been sunk upon his breast, and cast a peering glance on both those fair faces. The hat was dragged off after that scrutiny, and a very lowly though awkward recognition followed in a bow. He fumbled with one hand a little, and at length produced a letter.

"I wish to know where these people live," said he in broken English.

"To whom then is it addressed?" asked the elder lady, and she took the letter in her hand, and read the superscription by the light of a lamp hanging from the carriage top. For these

ladies whenever so travelling together, did not waste their time; when not speaking they studied or read together, and were in all respects like devotedly attached sisters, except that they were mother and daughter.

"What a singular—extraordinary coincidence —why Elisabeth, this letter is for us; and the writing too is the old scrawl, Schenk's hieroglyphic—who is to make it out?"

"Let me look, mamma."

And the two heads touched one another, bending over the letter. They spelled, smiled, laughed together as though no one else were by.

"The letter is for you then, lady, as you open it," said the youth, who was still standing close to the window, and looking in full upon them; thus placed, however, not seeming rude, if his behaviour were so. Now he spoke German. The lady who had addressed him first looked up, and answered in that language.

"It was very impertinent to open it without telling you first it was for us; but my old friend's writing made me forget for a moment everything else. But it would have saved you some trouble if you had inquired at the station where we lived; they know.

"Ah, but I could not pronounce the name, and I would not show the letter, because it would perhaps have been stolen, and it is all I have in the world, except something which is not of value *yet.* Now," changing his moody tone for one of sharp vivacity, "which way am I to go to find your house? at least not your house, of course I know my place, though you will let me see you there, and will do more than that, for Schenk promised me so. But my mother is with me, and is sick with the journey; she is sitting out there on the bank, and I must take her to an inn.

"Strange to bring her! Schenk does not say so," whispered the mother to the daughter, noiselessly close at her ear; but the whisper was heard.

"She goes with me everywhere," he said, in a sharp and scornful voice. "Your daughter does not leave *you.*"

The ladies glanced at each other, and in their mute eye-language, expressive to each other, they inquired, "What shall we do with both?" at least, the mother's eye inquired so; but the daughter answered alone in English. "We must take them back, mamma, it is three miles

to Northeden now, and I am sure no one who has come from the station can walk so far, particularly if tired."

The mother looked amazed, and somewhat anxious. "Go *back*? but if so we shall not get to Walden until eleven, nay twelve o'clock, and Charles will be so terribly alarmed about you, and will think you are taken suddenly ill."

"Oh no, he always has true presentiments, never false ones. A little anxiety will season him, he will have plenty of it in time to come. We cannot leave that pale creature sitting in the dust. Turn the horses' heads, draw up at the side of the road, and *then* when we have taken up those two persons, return to Northeden, and stop at the Homestead Inn." This last part of the sentence, delivered as an order, was directly obeyed; evidently the servants were accustomed to witness acts of eccentric kindness on the part of their employers. The door was opened, the youth handed his mother into the carriage, and followed himself, quite as a matter of course. *She* was so exhausted that she was soon asleep, and he would have shut himself up, as it were, with closed lids and lips, as though asleep, had not the elder lady asked him "How

did you know me? How did you trust the letter to me? Might I not also have stolen it?"

"I know a thief when I see one," was the reply. "First I thought that ladies, or anybody in so fine a carriage, could tell me the way to take. And when I saw you I knew you from the picture you gave Schenk."

"Has he kept that scratch all these years?" the lady asked. There was a nod, but no further reply or remark, the hat was dragged down again over the brows, and the face sunk again upon the breast.

"It has not taken long you see, mamma," said Elisabeth, as they stopped at the door of a picturesque country inn, with lights gleaming through crimson blinds below, and behind white curtains above, at the windows; and to the master of which, when he came out, his round countenance elongated like a face in a spoon, by surprise, the elder lady explained something which only drew it down the longer, though at the same time it was warped across by a smile, made grim with reverence. The woman woke up; the youth handed her out as composedly as he had handed her in, and while she stared round her, curtseyed, and poured forth an inar-

ticulate babble of gratitude, he looked on with an air almost impatient, and although he said "I thank you, lady," it was rather in the tone of a superior who acknowledges his due, than of an inferior (or even an equal), benefited by an act of unusual, and most opportune courtesy.

"Now fresh horses, mamma," said Elisabeth, "and we shall in no time be there."

CHAPTER II.

THE mother and daughter entered the ball-room at the auspicious moment when supper was served; auspicious for them, because its formality all broken up, the crowd pressing outwards, armed with one desire—a very natural one after the fatigue of a festival at the sultry autumn fall, that of refreshing itself—left them an almost deserted room behind it.

The gentlemen of the crowd were many of them gay in military costume, whose possible garishness was corrected and softened by the universal ladies' costume—white; for the heat and splendour of the weather demanded the lightest and the coolest covering. As all passed

to the pavilion on the lawn which would contain all the guests, there were many wafted 'I wonders,' and floating questions respecting India, whether the weather was as warm there, or could possibly be warmer—whether such and such exotics in the tent or on the tables, were children of the Indian sun; which Indian fruits were most refreshing; which station was the healthiest, the gayest, and the least infested by rattle-snakes. And these murmurs, insignificant in themselves, were accompanied by glances which rendered them significant, and smiles more sad than gay, and many a sigh half stifled; over all spreading the melancholy of which not the manliest is ashamed, the melancholy promise of the Unknown, to the daring and the devoted. For a common cause or condition binds the many hearts together in a stricter fraternity than that of blood; and the few great hearts and heroic minds raise the many of less intelligence and feeling to their own high standard, at least for the time they are to act and endure together. This regiment was very soon to leave for India, and for active service, and though a large proportion of its members were full of hasty blood, foolish with the frailty of youth; though there

were vain men, frivolous men, idle men, and selfish men, among them, still they all seemed alike endowed with a mysterious individual interest that each perceived in each—bound to one place, on the same business, liable to the same dangers, possibly the same destiny or death. So men feel in the time of a common plague or sickness, or when great judgments walk abroad, and fall on men together;—famine, or panic; as terrible as war and death, if less sublime than they.

There was one among those present having already seen active service, who had won glory already as his just guerdon during his first campaign in India, a man marvellously matured for his years, and of principles as pure as his stainless soldier's honour. It was he who advanced to meet Elisabeth, and who took her from her mother's side with the air of one who had more part in her possession already, than had her mother. Till her coming, his glance had been sad with suspense, but only with such gentle torment; neither shade of jealousy nor scowl of suspicion had darkened his fair and dauntless aspect. Yet she had kept him waiting three hours after the appointed time for their meeting that night;

and there remained but three weeks more in all, that he might hope to pass, before their separation, in the sunshine of her darling presence.

Instead of following the crowd, these two returned awhile to the dancing-room, where they had all the red seats to themselves, and where, it may be supposed, Elisabeth explained to him the cause of her delay, Her mother did not return to them, though she had greeted her daughter's companion with more than the interest of a friend;—she went on with the rest, and was unquestionably, although so late risen, the star of the evening. She was one of those rare natures whose fruitage is more precious than their flower; and the spells of her mature mind were more powerful than had been her charms in youth. Her imperial form, her bright complexion and brighter glance, her lips cast in the very mould of a smile, scarcely formed her fascination, or more than veiled with their impression the stronger one of her dazzling talents; and it is unquestionable, that but for her noble nature, generous heart, and delicate reserve, this Lady Delucy would have been a very dangerous person—and perhaps herself in danger. But heaven had formed her in a holy, as nature

in a happy hour, and she beneficently diffused her influence, as a summer day its light. Even beauty has a beneficent influence when it dwells with a woman framed as she. For such a woman, losing her husband early, and retaining her whole grace if not her freshness, and gaining the full experience both social and intellectual, from a studious and refined existence, than which, to the inexperienced, there is no greater attraction:—such a woman has it in her power to affect the youthful of the opposite sex, more determinately than do the majority of their age, in her own. Such a one, through thoughtlessness, or vanity, or ungoverned impulse,—called by the cowardly charitable, excitability,—may injure the first impressions of women formed by men still ignorant, and rash with the virgin susceptibility of youth,—and even if her own reputation be not injured, its mortal raiment may be smirched, till the inward brightness fails, through its destined medium, to flash on mortal eyes. But one so virtuous, possessed entirely of herself, and gay with conscious goodness, is an ideal of maternity; all the young are as her children, and if they call her not by the name of mother, her heart responds as such to theirs.

Lady Delucy could not help feeling interested in every young man present who was a brother officer of Colonel Lyonhart, to whom her daughter was affianced. And they were one and all bewitched by her; a swarm of them behind her chair, and one on each hand, and several across the table: to all these she listened with delight, though it is possible their conversational powers were very limited, and inferior to her own. But in their ruling subject of discourse her heart and hopes were bound up. They all sincerely admired, the most sincerely liked, Charles Lyonhart, and for some who had served with him or under him already, he was an actual hero. Tales of his successful daring, and natural power over those singular Eastern aborigines of which Europe talks so much and knows so little;—of his simple virtue and austere self-reverence;—assurances of his iron strength and iron will, alike physically and morally defying for him the stimulant climate; even the probable minutiæ of the voyage and journey were grateful to her ear. Such preoccupation accounted for the fact, that she neither spoke to, nor specially noticed, any other of the guests at the other tables or her own.

When all were ready to dance again, and she was returning to the ball-room, rather anxious for fear Elisabeth and her friend should be rudely disturbed, she happened to brush the elbow of a gentleman just inside the door. With her usual amiability she paused and would have apologised; but instead, she started back,—murmured, "Diamid," in a tone of mingled interest and surprise; then recovering her full self-possession, she held out her hand and said with great cordiality, "I did not know you had returned;—why did you not send me word?"

"Here is the reason," he answered in a proud voice, and with an air of mingled defiance and delight; and he drew forward a young, very young girl, who had fallen behind him while Lady Delucy spoke, "Lady Geraldine Albany; my wife." Again the elder lady lost her self-command, she started and flushed, and gazed with earnest wonder; there soon stood tears in her eyes. On account of the girl herself, such tears would not have been signs of too exaggerated interest, drawn from a maternal heart. For she could be scarcely more than a child in years, yet her vivid and pictorial loveliness, of a lofty stamp and suggestion, gave promise of great power

and greater pride: power to suffer, pride to endure; and through all, passion, which was existence, and a loving nature which would set no limits to its necessity and demand for love. A being so far above the gentle average of her sex, that to invest her too early with the estate which is either the crown of blessings or of burdens, had been an error, if not a deed to merit a graver name, on the parts of her parents and her husband, a man of mature age, and into whose youth had been crowded experience and adventure such as seldom spread over an entire human life prolonged to farthest age.

Few persons besides Lady Delucy would so have reasoned. Others would have found in the child's extraordinary beauty a charming excuse for her premature social exposition. And though her unconscious pride and innocence touched Lady Delucy, she was far more troubled to observe her unsecreted devotion to the man who defying its infancy, had chained her soul in its cradle. Yet this man was one to seem, to a chance scrutiny, as interesting a person as his bride. Delicacy of structure gave distinction to a figure otherwise insignificantly small, and the whole countenance bore the impress of sensibility,

sagacity—it might be genius, yet might *only* be—success.

The first thought for the beautiful child, so painful, passed into another and a peacefuller reflection in Lady Delucy's heart. "I thank God," she thought, "that I had the courage to prevent *my* child from leaving me too early." Elizabeth was eighteen, yet her mother, in sanctioning her betrothal to Colonel Lyonhart, had refused to part with her for three years; ostensibly, on account of the ardent and exhausting climate whither service sent Charles Lyonhart. A deeper prudence also might have justified such a refusal, at least so it seemed to her at this moment.

"This is Lady Delucy," said Mr. Albany to his wife, after introducing her.

"Oh, I am afraid of her!" said the child half shrinking, yet smiling too. Then, raising her glorious eyes, "Diamid, I mean Mr. Albany, was always telling me abroad how clever and severe you are, and how hopeless it was for me to think you would ever like me."

Lady Delucy took both her little hands. "You are a sweet young lady, but how is it I have never seen you before? I do not even

know your *old* name, if you can have anything old about you."

"I was Geraldine Hope, Lord Chevening is my father, and the great William Witt was my great uncle. Diamid is going to take me to see his tomb, in Westminster Abbey, I have never seen it yet."

"There is political interest for you, at least," exclaimed Diamid Albany, with an air of fondness. "As for your not seeing her, that is not strange, for no one has seen her here, she is no English heath-flower with its honey bells all ready for the wild bee. And I married her from the nursery, which she falsely fancied was a schoolroom, where she was spelling out words and meanings in her own fashion, so ignorantly, that I was touched with compassion, and took the lesson of life into my own hands."

Geraldine yawned like a baby. "Oh Diamid," she whispered, "I am dreadfully sleepy; why should we not go home, as you do not dance?"

"And do *you* not dance?" enquired Lady Delucy, "yours at least is the dancing age."

"Oh no, no! I don't care for dancing, and detested it when I learned: I never was at a ball before."

"I am very glad Mr. Albany dislikes dancing, it is quite beneath a man of genius. And besides," added the little creature with a cynicism rather plaintive than amusing, "there is not a single man in the room I should choose to dance with, they all look like fools. No *wise* man would dance, I think it such a waste of time."

"Why a greater waste of time to dance than to look on dancing?" asked Lady Delucy.

"He was obliged to come," she whispered; "he hates them all, and so do I. But Mr. Purves is to be his brother member, at least he hopes so, and he wishes to conciliate him. Diamid has been talking to him all the evening, and I all the time in a dream, talked nonsense in my sleep to Mrs. Purves."

"Why, you are a better politician than I Diamid; you must know I always call him Diamid; he is as a son to me; Diamid coming in for the county? I am much surprised."

"It is papa who has done it, and his friends; papa quite worships Diamid."

"Geraldine," he broke in, "you are very tired you say; you have done more than I asked you. Let us go home."

"Will you let me come and see you very

soon?" asked Geraldine of Lady Delucy. "May I come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" said her husband. "What an audacious little goddess thou art. Lady Delucy never has a minute for her *friends*, her cases for bounty are so numerous."

"But I am a case for her bounty, what else? And I am not afraid of her though you said I should be. May I come to-morrow, for Diamid is going out; for the first time he will leave me, and I shall not be able to bear——"

"—Let her come then," said her husband, chiefly to stop the sentence short.

"Yes, do come Lady Geraldine. I shall be alone in the morning, and though my daughter will be engaged, yet I think an old lady can entertain you, who remembers your husband as a little boy, and a very pretty little boy too."

"But before your taste was formed, when you were only a pretty little girl," added Diamid Albany. At these words, few and foolish enough, Lady Delucy smiled, but with a sort of scorn that made fuller her lip and glanced in lightning from her sunny eyes. Then Diamid, as though afraid that scorn should strike wonder

from his young wife's mind, did she perceive it, drew her hand hastily to his arm. "Good night," said Geraldine, her face suffused and beaming with the happiness she had not yet learned to hide from men.

CHAPTER III.

"You will come with us to-night?" said Lady Delucy to Charles Lyonhart.

"She feasts me to-day that I may starve on scraps to-morrow," he answered gaily, at least in a manner that *would* be gay, whatever its master *could* not feel. On the way home it was perhaps as well that Lady Delucy was in a reverie of her own, or she might too rudely have disturbed theirs—by remarking it. For they did not speak, having long since passed that stage of affianceship when persons are studying each other's characters through the medium of conversation, and at no time had the young soldier been a man great in words. His

sentences, few and epigrammatic, and thundered in trenchant tones from lips to whose expression his eagle glance lent double energy, had once, nay twice already, conquered without a sword; but his pulses, once touched by love at the quivering heart-spring, lapsed into a strong, calm current, unconscious of control. The condition of war lashed his mettle as the bray of the trumpet that of the war-steed, the condition of peace made him gentle to love, even with a gentleness that passed the love of women. He was one of the few who may safely be prejudged as constant; who, having chosen a calling, never know in it caprice or change; or, having found a heart to rest on, never weary of repose.

When the three reached home, Lady Delucy, late as it was, or rather early in the morning, could not find it in her heart to forbid Elisabeth and her lover their farewell beneath the stars, for the moon had set, and the first phantom of oriental glory glowed at the gates of day. And those divine eyes, whether they watch from unpeopled worlds in light alone, or with the light of spirits, never looked down, since the world was in its cradle, on two souls who sinned

less against love in loving. Never one word of complaint passed his lips, nor found breath in his sighs, when in her presence; he seemed resolved to sweeten the bitter of separation for her, by leaving with her none but blissful memories.

Elisabeth slept with her mother as she had ever done since the night she was born. When at last they lay down side by side, to rest an hour or two, the mother and daughter found it alike each, impossible to sleep.

"It is the twitter of the birds just waking up I think, mamma," said Elisabeth, "and the *feeling* that it is getting lighter and lighter every instant, though one can't see it for the shutters. It is very hard to sleep in the light, except when one is sick."

"If you really won't try, then, I will tell you a piece of intelligence which will surprise you, and I hope please you too."

"Pray tell me mamma, I thought you looked as if you had heard something strange, or something strange had happened."

The mother's face was turned away, a warm flush coloured it, which she would have feared might be seen, even with closed shutters, and by the light of a shaded lamp.

"Diamid is married, that is all, but it is something new, is it not?"

As warm a glory covered the daughter's face, but she did not turn it away; she half sat up in bed. "Married, Diamid married? how ridiculous I have been! how cruelly I am disappointed. Are you quite sure? you know they always will tell stories about Diamid; I do not believe it, and you cannot."

"Is it possible that you did not see him to-night?"

"See him, no. Was he there? did he tell you himself?"

"She was there with him, I saw her."

"What and who is she?"

"Lord Chevening's daughter, a child who can scarcely have seen sixteen."

"What can Lord Chevening have been about? How unlike him, with his rational ideas, and worldly prudence! I thought there was something odd too about their child, that she was not to be seen abroad, or something."

"That I do not know, but I know the Chevening party must have been trying to win over Diamid; he is to be returned for the county too. At all events he does not treat

her as though any interest save that of feeling had been at work within him, and that I am very glad to see. He is very fond and kind."

"That is impossible, mamma, whatever he has done, for six months ago—"

"—Six months ago, Charles came home, Elisabeth."

"Mother, you are cruel to me; had it not been for Charlie, who has taught me all I know on the great subject, I should not have been so certain. But I did think he—I mean Diamid—went away only on probation; I thought he would come back, and that then—or perhaps when I was gone—But, certainly, *that* would be so long to wait."

Only these words were bitter, not their tone. How long was it to be? Three years, her mother had decreed; but foreboding eclipsed faith, and in the dreary shadow the years were magnified, seemed to spread to the impossible's blank verge. Her mother dared not comfort her, because the only consolation she could have bestowed was one she dared not offer. This darling passion of her motherhood, her single permitted love, she had destroyed as an idol, when she gave promises that she should leave

her side—when she felt that she held her in trust for another, who would carry her away whither her own sphere of social and private duties could not in conscience be removed. The separation would be complete when it came, except in that spiritual sense so much more painful to spirits in prison of the flesh, than to those whom death has divided the one from the other. People called this mother selfish, prim, eccentric, even unnatural. Perhaps her own child was constrained in her demeanour and her affection by the course which they ridiculed. But it made no difference to her, she believed that she was doing right, and it is not too much to say, that she suffered much more than her child in carrying out her own decision. Elisabeth's frame was as fragile as her mind was strong, and like all the intellectual who are weak in body, she had a spirit whose power deceived herself. She thought she could bear anything — fever, miasma, fatigue, watching—she was sure that the dead mid-Indian heats would be delightful, because, in England, she loved the summer best. But Elisabeth believed herself capable of bearing anything, just because she had never had anything to bear;

luxury, repose, ease, blended in her experience; and her delicate health, her nervous sensibility, acted on only by the most delicate impressions, and by every association that could soothe and charm, had actually been the medium of enjoyment only, or of excitement more glorious than joy.

Her mother knew this, and knew also, what a long dream of misery is life from which health's bloom has been brushed—that irreparable bloom; and how far more terrible is the doom of those in whom the nerve life has been untoned. A spring which can never again respond to the *full* necessity of the hour, and which ever fails when the demand is greatest on it—if once over-strained—if indeed it be not *broken*.

Still the mother could not be *certain*, that her child's full womanhood would be stronger than her early youth—she could only hope so, and strive after such a result as much as a mother and a mortal may.

But being a perfect woman she was not, therefore, a perfect person; nor did she think herself one, nor fancy, because her talents were so fine and varied, that the winged genius had made his nest in her soul. The balance between

her cherished independence of thought and feeling and the indwelling principle of duty which ruled her actions, made her remarkable, for such a balance is rare.

It had been to her mind's expansion a great advantage that she was not born in the rank she occupied now, and which she was most unexpectedly called to take. Still she was of descent which is called respectable, in society, being the only child of a merchant whose family had for ages trafficked with the merchants of the east, whether for fruits, drugs, or perfumes, it little signifies. He was often called to the Levant, and there he married the daughter of a Levantine merchant, his ally; it was said that her dowry was accepted in consideration of payment for a debt. It is certain, that he was the last person that should have so married, for he was eminently English, in habit, thought, and belief; hard-headed, and not much softer-hearted; rigidly, if narrowly, educated; sharp-seeing in his own business; intellectually blind; and as prejudiced as he was practical, his practice being routine in ordinary rounds, not perseverance in any new-detected principle. Yet being the last person who should have done it, he was on that

very account the first to do it; and in so doing he gratified his innate obstinacy at the expense of the approbation of his English friends, and his wife, very beautiful in the first instance, gratified his carnal impulse at the expense of her after-happiness, or possible improvement —for such impulses are ever without moral fruition.

There is nothing so painful, because nothing so unnatural and inconsistent, as the position of an Oriental, it matters not of what race, or degree of capacity, under a northern sun; in the country of the north most civilised, the more especially. It is more cruel to bring such hither to live, or rather to exist in a condition whose vitality is far below that of vegetation, than to kill them in their own country; but of course no one who has not so suffered, will agree to this. However, this lady suffered intensely, although her instincts had not been refined by education into aspirations, nor her mind sufficiently opened to desire such cultivation, of the only kind she could have here received. The languor which seemed to swathe her faculties, might have been penetrated by influences of knowledge in her own natural home, but here they lay uncon-

scious, not as in a chance swoon, but a perpetual hibernation. It was not marvellous that this monotonous existence should shock the realist and doer, should seem a moral monstrosity, under the pale broad daylight that shines on mechanical perfection, in a land whose ground throbs, and whose echoes pant with the pulses of the giant progress.

She made no friends, and as a friend lost her husband, who did not misuse her bodily, because he valued his class reputation, and had the conscience, stingingly sensitive, of the sectarian. So she sank into profounder depths of indolent repose, the abuse of that which was in moderation as necessary to her as the siesta to the southern, the melting bath to the Turk, and the dream-drugged atmosphere of the divan, to the whole oriental world. But this lady did not smoke, because her husband had told her when he brought her to England, that it is not here becoming, and to her was natural that slavish obedience, which is even touching because it is so implicit. Very early she became Christianised for the same reason, it was so natural to her to yield belief, she received the faith of the greatest of ensamples with the unquestioning

readiness peculiar to the child and the slave. She was even anxious that her only child should be early imbued with what she had been told to believe, and therefore believed, as she did not do what her husband forbade her, because he was her husband; and for the same reason, because he ordered it, she called her child by the two commonest of the many common Christian names which are naturalised in England, though her own flowery, figurative tongue presented many a musical, symbolic, poetic name to tempt her. So Elisabeth Mary were the names she gave her infant. Her first English winter saw this infant's birth, and the hard cold was little likely to restore her nervous tone or physical strength; she never recovered either; neither sedatives, nor stimulants prescribed by English physicians, affected her in the least, because she was cut off from the only ones that could affect such a constitution—climate and tobacco.

Between such a father and such a mother the child early learned what few children even imagine, that there are vast differences between persons, characters, and conditions. Her father, without meaning exactly to accomplish such a

result, held up her mother to her as contemptible, because ignorant of what persons round her knew. He taught Elisabeth to return thanks in her prayers that she had been born in England, with a father who was neither Jew, Turk, infidel nor heretic, whatever her mother might be. To be grateful for the existent social code which raises a child to its father's position, whatever its mother's may have been. He gave her governesses and masters, with certificates from college and employer. They taught her all they knew; her mind was very quick to receive, but she could not retain all, only the best part, that is, the exercise of the memory aroused the thinking faculties.

But her greatest pleasure, a sort of delightful dream that she dreamed every day at a certain hour, was to go and see her mother; her father set apart one regular time for this filial and maternal interchange of intercourse, because it was proper, and religious, that a child should honour both her parents. So she paid her visits to the large room, filled with overpowering, melting heat from two large ornamented stoves, filled with dim light from low-hanging lamps, even at noonday, because to exclude the draughts thick

crimson curtains fell always over the shuttered windows. No chairs nor table furnished the room, only piles of cushions, in the midst of a heap of which her mother reclined by day and on which she slept at night. Always sumptuously attired in glittering stuffs and gorgeous shawls, her dark skin lighted up by blinding jewels; and featured delicately, with her moony eyes and soft slow motions, she captivated her child's fancy, naturally a brilliant one, and it was only in her child's presence that she was ever known to talk. When they were alone together, and Elisabeth coaxed her and caressed, she would now and then tell her about the land whence she had been brought; the mosques, the palaces, the palms; the bazaar and the harem; the fountains, flowers, and skies. Perhaps, had her father heard these confidences, made in broken English, helped out with racy idiom and translated proverb, he would have forbidden his wife to talk upon the subject to his daughter, but he was scarcely ever present, and when so her voice was silent, she hardly even whispered to him greeting and farewell. Elisabeth kept them to herself, merely because she did not think they would interest her father, and yet they were always in her thoughts, and the gladdest

day of all her youngest life was that on which she found a copy of the Arabian Nights in the library.

Her father, who seldom had either time or inclination to take her out with him, was so delighted with a long letter, half in French, and half in Italian, with a Latin postscript, written to him by her the Christmas she was fourteen, that he took her to see a pantomime. From that hour she had an aim in life; she was always dreaming, yet performing in her dreams; the creative faculty was roused, and by its instantaneous reciprocation the artistic mind was revealed to itself. Her father, discovering her enthusiastic delight when on different occasions he took her to the theatre with him afterwards, immediately curtailed her enjoyments in that line, began to have grave doubts whether it was proper a taste so decided should be encouraged, at last drew a line, as he expressed it, and only allowed her to hear a play of Shakspeare's twice a year, and those always historical ones. But even few and far between, those were angel visits to her.

Her progressive mind affected not her innocence of heart. She even clung more and more

to her helpless mother, and once entreated her father to try a change of climate to her own country, for her mother's health. But her father answered, "She does not wish it, she has never asked me, and it would make her suffer more to be disturbed." Nor had she ever confessed it to her child; her pride was the pride of the eastern, the most stubborn in the world.

When Elisabeth was twenty-one, there occurred a crisis in commerce, one of those climaxes which are sudden prosperity to a few, to the many the crush of ruin, and which seem periodical, like war and epidemy—perhaps necessary for the expurgation of men's minds from the lust of luxury and over-confidence. Her father, who though not speculative, kept all his capital afloat, lost all in the losses of others richer than himself. There only remained a small sum, about five hundred pounds, which he had reserved as a present for his daughter on her coming of age—and this she had just received; she placed more than half in her father's hands, he knew not what she meant to do with the rest, but she only besought him not to move from his house, for a few months, because her mother was accustomed to it.

She had made up her mind in a moment; and was sanguine of success, as the pure in purpose, full of conscious power, have a right to be. A chief theatrical manager of that day, was as remarkable for discernment and benevolence, as for talent and popularity, and it was to him she went, confided her scheme, and was received by him as his own pupil, a rare honour, but well deserved. She studied with ardour, persistency, and industry, which those who sneer at the dramatic calling as an amusement (like novel-writing), might have found it impossible to exert in their own worldly business. She worked so hard that her master, unflinching as he was in ordinary cases, gave her the credentials for public initiation at the end of three months, together with a parting boon of encouraging words, such as had never been the verdict of his lips before. In fact she owed much to her previous mental cultivation, and so he told her; but she owed the most to a singularly serene disposition, which quelled insurgent excitability, and lent her self-control in action, which it is the work of years artificially to attain. When everything was settled between the manager and master, now her employer and

friend, she told her father of her scheme, secreted until perfect, for their subsistence as a family, through her newly developed art. Only an English father would have outraged a child's tenderness and devotion as he did, in return for her confidence. Instead of giving her strength by his approving smile, strength very needful to one whose excessive modesty was the only possible enemy to her success, he raved, and stormed with rage, only impotent because it could find no real basis, and when the heat of the mood had subsided to a calm more cruel, he tried to argue without actual premises, and darkened his counsel by words without knowledge, till his fury turned against himself, and doubly aggravated his insane anger towards his child. He commanded her to relinquish her design on the pain of excommunication from his thoughts and love; and this final utterance in its cool measured tones, dried up the tears which his harsher heat had drawn from the stricken rock, for firm as a rock remained her rooted intention, though she suffered to the full as bitterly as he had meant she should. But it was a false sense of duty, the *name*, against the true sense of duty, the

necessity, and that sufficed; conscience against prejudice prevailed. She knew that else they must starve, that her mother must perish if forced into less luxurious routine, that her father's head was white with his early winter, creeping on his barren autumn. She knew that none other of her talents, nor all his business habits could gain employment which should even supply them with bread, much less sustain her mother in her needful ease.

So she went to work without his blessing, which she was innocent enough to covet, and in the face of the disapprobation and contempt of all her relations and acquaintances besides. These last, with the usual inconsistency of such persons, all went to witness her first public performance, applauded her in the theatre, and went home and slandered her to their heart's content.

But her father never went to see her and hear her, never mentioned her objectionable calling, nor confessed himself indebted to her in the least degree, Yet he ate of her bread, and drank of her cup, and was to her as a father still, though he treated her no longer as a child. So without a father's sanction, the most sacred

save that of conscience, or a mother's presence and protection, she was exposed to the roughest of all the tides of opinion, and breasted its breakers by her own strength alone. For three years it prevailed, her reputation remained as pure as her fame was fresh, and but for her reticence of demeanour, her triumphs might have drawn envy from her inferiors. At the end of that time too she would have been rich, but for her double burden of filial love and duty.

A young man of what is called high birth, but ill-bred, worse-principled, and vicious most of all, happened to turn towards her his roving eyes, and unhappily she fixed them. Her stately sweetness, and excelling character, excited him to attempt an adventure, which none but he would have dared to dream of, much less to undertake. And he failed at the very outset, nor could he succeed in obtaining a single interview; and all his letters were returned unopened, except the first one, which had been opened without suspicion of its contents. Through a false heart he could afford to act falsely without compunction, and the false unfaltering tongue assisted his revenge. First in one ear alone he breathed the lie, reversing

every circumstance; *hers* the dawning interest, the devoted attention, the insinuating correspondence; the crowning fact,—the crowning falsehood,—her ardent and uncontrollable attachment, declared and gratified, but gratified only with the calm facility and freedom of a man of fashion. This tale, told to one person under a half-promise of secresy, made and received by two persons alike dishonourable; very soon spread, first in whispered hints of abhorrent deeds, soon a bruit of degraded purity, at last a belief in it that could not, because it would not, be shaken.

Unfortunately it was while she was absent from her usual home, spending a few weeks to rest and recruit in country air during a needful suspension of her engagements, that her father heard the report, and believed it, so true is it if men will, they are allowed to harden their own hearts.

He impotently resolved never to see her again, and wrote to tell her so, darkening still more blackly the fair page so sullied, by curses as impotent as the resolution. But she was weak enough to be made ill by that letter; rather innocent enough, filial enough, and new enough

to *life*, with its tests the most austere and awful always for the purest. She was so ill, she could not answer it, could not rebut the charge; by which worldly women would only have been made strong with indignation; but which prostrated her physically, stunned her mentally, effects which served to convince people more and more, that the charge was a true one.

A week after this letter had been sent, her father, who had not left her house yet, despite his intention never to see her again, was sitting in his room with a countenance grim and pale, but past repentance as he was, serving only to suggest remorse. A gentleman was announced, and entered; a white-haired man, plain-faced, dignified; who pulled out a card, threw it on the table, and, still standing though requested to take a seat, said calmly, "I have come formally to obtain a formal consent to my intended proposals for your daughter's hand. As a matter of form I say, merely, for it is otherwise of no value. I am of age to be her father, as well as in a position to protect her as a husband from her own parent—and, more unhappy parent than you have dared to assume yourself! from my own son."

The father to whom he spoke, turned so deadly pale with the reaction of nature shamefully repressed, that the visitor was obliged to ring the bell for water, though he showed no compassion when a more deathlike swoon ensued. He might have felt compassion, for he was easily moved towards it, had he not detected the glance of unholy triumph, and lustful pride, when his own name was read by the other on the card he had thrown down. For truly virtuous, though exclusive and proud enough in his own fashion, the Earl Delucy valued his own character above his rank, and as for his family history he would only have been thankful to have the last page erased and to throw the book into the fire; so terrible to his heart and his faith was its necessary record, the useless, vicious, and abominable character and career of his only son. It had been some time before the report of Elisabeth's degradation had reached him, still longer before he learned that his own son had first given utterance to it, and pretended she was his own victim. Lord Delucy had only seen her once or twice, he was no play-goer, but the profoundest Shakspearian student could not have

possessed more discrimination of character: and when he heard she was ill he went to see her himself, and in the presence of two physicians whom he forced to accompany him, and a nurse who had been hastily provided, he assured her of his unshaken faith in her goodness and her innocence. That assurance was to her revival, and saved her from the grave where very likely her reputation would have been lost for ever for those still living, who, perhaps to spite etiquette which prescribes that of those departed only *good* must be spoken, are remarkably fond of *thinking* evil of the same.

Elisabeth really married Lord Delucy out of gratitude; no other sentiment could find room within, and as for passion, she shrank from the very name with a terror only pardonable in one who had suffered so desperately from its simulation. Her gratitude, sincere, boundless, and devoted, dwelt alone in her heart, filled up the measure of her thankfulness to heaven whom first she thanked. But no colder shrine than her spirit ever guarded from the wanton wind the vestal flame. She felt that happiness in its primitive purity, could never affect her

now, and that love was a severer friend than she had deemed him. In her duty she never failed any more than in her gratitude, and in her duty she must have been perfect, for her husband never missed anything in her, neither passion, nor love, nor even happiness. Her light step, her sunny smile, her faithful breast, at least brought him the fulness of that delight of which he had clasped, in his first alliance, the fleshless skeleton. She, too, was rewarded, for her father restored to her his blessing, which, how little soever its intrinsic value, was very dear to her. Her mother returned to her own land, and lived many years there, rejoicing in the sun. Her husband's child, sick, dreary, lost in terrors and the blackest unbelief, came to die near her, helped by her gentleness through the darkest hour; and if not at peace with himself, perhaps so with God, because penitent, went to rest.

As she watched by her husband's dying pillow, made easy by her sweet tenderness, her soft solicitude, and sacred influence, she made the inward resolution, which she renewed on a more religious vow upon his closed grave, that whatever might her temptations be, she would

never marry again; to his memory she devoted herself, and to his child, their only daughter; his conservative tastes she cherished as her own; his castle wore its raiment of decay proudly, his fallen trees found their last beds in the soil from which they sprang—she was, in short, the guardian of his child and heiress. But she had not controlled that child in her affection, and blessed God that it was not part of her duty to do so; but that it was a part of her duty in her own to control herself she believed, and acted in that faith. Time had brought a victim to the sacrificial altar of her heart, she had slain it, her own love in her own happiness.

One great delight, besides her daughter, was still her own. Generous—to a fault, if she had not been most just; large-hearted, open-handed, and full of sympathy with art, she dedicated to artists if needy, perseverant, and genuine, the large fortune settled on her by her husband, which it did not trouble her to receive, as it scarcely diminished sensibly the vast one reverting to her child, and was entirely separate from it—the fruits of her husband's services as an eminent ruler, in his youth, in India.

CHAPTER IV.

It was early day. Northeden lay in a valley, its castle and its hamlet, and the valley was bright with culture as a teeming garden, with a core of the richest timber growth in its centre, from whose shade, in the distance a deep green cloud, sprung the pale turrets to which the new-risen sun, piercing the mild mist of the lowland, now lent a roseate burnish.

The castle was old enough to have been a ruin, and restored; not with the restitution which has fallen like a curse on many a shrine antique; the plaster-glare of freshened arches, the ghost-colours of modern windows. Here old materials fallen from use or into misuse were

replaced and re-combined. Tapestries of hues as dim as dying flowers, still rendered faithfully from the walls their pale pictorial legends; flowers carved in wood,—an art in its perfection lost like the art of glass distaining,—were eaten with the canker of decay, yet held their graceful sway on cornice, frame, and moulding, mixed with leaf garlands, worm-perforated until they seemed brownly glimmering like skeletons of forest leaves in autumn. Old furniture, old carpets, old damasks, filled the state-rooms without one garish inconsistency. To velvet curtains, whitened in long lines where the sun had burned upon their folds, to leathern hangings, whose gold figures Time's finger had rasped to pallid yellow, to blackened stone, chipped marble, phantom portrait, stole a lesser than day's own light even at fullest noon, from small unfrequent windows, gloomed deeper by the intense tints, with which old art had gemmed the upper panes. The breeze, whether creeping in through crack, or dancing through open door, seemed to lend itself to mysterious echoes the moment it entered the halls, and the tempest-tone of the wind sounded like a roll of thunder heard in a vault or cavern. On winter nights of

storm, too, the trees in the park roared like a sea against that thunder, and there scarcely passed a day, during the latter equinox, but some huge hoar elm, or oak of fabulous descent crashed to the trembling ground. These corpse trunks, never removed when fallen, lay here and there under the leaf-domes and arch-avenues, across your path you met them, or crushing flat the long fern of the glades;—some half-bleached, dry as ivory, with hollows that the wild bees made their cells in; others enamelled with mosses of emerald and gold, or crusted with lichen delicately fair as the sea-flowers which wreath a sunken wreck.

A high wall wrapped so thick with ivies that not a brick-tint started through the glossy gloom, compassed the park all round, a solitude undesecrated by the step of progress, and than which none serener or sweeter could be found in the summer noons when the insect hum, the myriad chirp, and the breeze that chafed the leafy-deeps, melted altogether into a dream of sound most like that dream of shade. There was a garden next to the park, but that too rather grand than gay, with walks as wide as roads, and deserts of grass spangled with

flower oases, for lawns; with pillars whose crowning vases were too vast to fill with any flowers save hollyhocks, and dahlias; with black evergreen masses cut into monstrous shapes; with fountains of quaint device, some trickling, others dry; and mossed dials, and summer houses large enough to live in. The garden wall continued that of the path, as richly ivied, and passed down to the gates, bordering on each side the entrance avenue of elms planted six deep, a quarter of a mile long.

There was another approach to the castle, quite close to the tower called the summer tower, because only in summer inhabited. In the wall on that side of the garden the ivy from a certain spot had been cut away, and the bricks taken out, leaving an aperture large enough for a single person to pass through, filled with the gate of the lightest iron fretwork. To stand on the castle-side and look through that gate, was like turning from the mellow darkening twilight to the dazzle of fullest noon. In a smaller garden, flowers were blossoming in that perfection which it is the necessary homage of the flower-worshipper's most jealous passion to create. Round the soft lawn, unspeckled by

one peasant daisy, the wall was hidden by a light gothic framework, delicately gilt, filled with foreign plants whose blooms bathed in the sunlight, calm as jewels displayed behind a shrine of crystal. As brilliant were the flower-beds on the lawn, but there the jewel calm was agitated by each quiver of the breeze, to that stir of infinitely blended fragrance which is its paradise to the sense of smell, and that silent harmony with which the flutter of colour feasts the eye. Urns overflowed with sparkling creepers, baskets of wrought alabaster held rose clusters as snowy-pure, tier above tier aspired pyramids that seemed blossoming flame. In sea-water basins gleamed the flowers of the ocean, and in one bright water lay lilies of the wave, white, golden, azure, fanned by mysterious maiden hair and bordered with blue forget-me-not.

There was a house in this garden too, its low white walls crossed with trellis from verandah to chimney, the trellis so thickly interlaced with delicate plants, in fullest flower, that it looked rather a bower than a domestic dwelling. All the rooms, all on the ground floor, showed through the crystal sashes of their windows a soft gleam of colours like shadows

of the flowers without. All the walls were hung with flower-coloured silks; one, a spring chamber, with hues of hyacinths, pink, lilac, purple, tender blue; a summer drawing-room with rose hues, pale and white and damask; an autumn one with tints of geranium, and green relieved with gold. The dining-room was filled with gems of pictures, and fruit beautifully painted seemed dropping from the ceiling. One bed-room was lined with white, soft and pure as the cradle of a child seemed the bed with its satin quilt, and lace curtain falling from a single pillar of carved ivory, tufted with one snowy plume: while marble cherubs in recesses here and there held lamps that when lighted, cast on their dimpled countenances a flush like the roses of the dawn.

But now, at morning, the artificial flush has sickened before the living lights that mock all art and artifice. The sun looks in at one window without any greeting from hues that mimic his own rainbows, the window of the only simple room in that delicate and sumptuous dwelling. Strict need of the severe student had ordered its furniture only, a table with its oil-cloth cover somewhat rubbed, old turkey carpet faded, one large chair: one desk, one wicker basket filled with torn letters;

the walls lined with books, none gaily bound, the monotony of the many uniforms suggesting standard authors, works of reference, official registers. In that room, writing at the table, sat Diamid Albany. Pale the night before, he was ghastly now, and shadows blue as those cast in hollows of the snowdrift, rimmed his great dark eyes. The droop of those eyes, in society so vividly expanded, the frown between them, melancholy rather than stern, the relaxed under lip, the nervous clutch of the pen between the fingers as though their own strength were not sufficient to retain it unseconded by the power of the will, the stoop and rounded shoulder, all told a tale of weariness irresistible by the body; but mentally, never gaining the upper hand. Weariness of what? Certainly not of that apparition, which entering at the door, melts every line of the face into momentary softness, brims the eye with kindness warmer than affection, and swells the breast with a sigh of ineffable relief.

It was Geraldine in her unfashionable morning dress, a loose white robe of lawn, her lovely hair flowing to her waist in child-like curls. Child as she was in years, and old for his years as he was, there seemed no incongruence between them, even

in point of age. Only genius, with its daring innocence, its untaught power to solve all mysteries of feeling, could have rendered her a companion as well as a consoling charmer, for one of his sagacity and experience. She understood his character without caring that she did so, she drew upon his enormous mental resources with confidence but without apology, never did she descant upon that which he valued far too secretly to bear its mention—his idol of renown. Too little yet, to say of one too liberally gifted with sympathy, with intelligence, with passion; too early gifted with consummate joy.

"I am going to Lady Delucy's," said she, clinging to his embracing arm, and covering his hand with kisses fit to fall on an infant's cheek, so soft and noiseless were they, "and it is a very good thing I am, for do you know if I were *alone* without you, even for a morning *now*, my heart would beat so with suspense that I should die."

"No, no, you would *wait* for me."

"To wait would be death," she answered; "is not night the emblem of death, does it not wait for the morning? but you will only be six hours, four at the committee, and one hour to ride there, and the other back."

"I shall not ride, it takes too long, I take the train."

But Geraldine threw her arms round him; she wept, she implored, and the roses burned feverish on her cheeks. "Not the train, Diamid, not the train without me. I *know* something would happen, I should die of fear. I know you are safe on horseback, all creatures love you."

"Saving only men."

"But promise, promise!"

So he promised, well knowing the result of hard riding to the strained nervous system which had been the solitary demon battling with his ambition, all his life, always conquered, though its thrusts were felt so keenly.

Geraldine stood beside the horse while he mounted, stroked its black silk mane, ran for a rose to put beside its ear, took one of its delicately shod feet in her hand, and flapped a little dust off it with her handkerchief, talked of riding behind her husband in man's disguise, "a jockey-groom, Mr. Albany's last," made him change watches with her, in short, detained him by every possible expedient, till he had barely half-an hour for a ride of eleven miles. Just

before he left her, he gave her the key of the iron gate between their garden and park.

"Shall I give your love to her?" asked Geraldine.

"I have given it all to you, there is none left for any other." And so he rode away, and she returned into the garden, sat down amidst the flowers and wept bitterly, blindingly, as some weep over the grave of love. Oh haughty passion, untrained in thy blossom hours, flinging wild tendrils round a heart too fully satisfied; what shall be thy fruition? or shall those tendrils, grown more strong and clinging still, strangle the delicate spirit Contentment, more easily than sorrow could wither it away? Certain it was, however, that she could not bear herself alone for long; she rose hastily, filled her garden-hat with fresh-blown flowers as she passed them, and went through the gate into the park.

CHAPTER V.

Lady Delucy saw Geraldine cross the lawn from the ground floor windows of a room she had always been used to share with her daughter, till *she* had found a companion dearer still than her mother; Geraldine stepped in at the window, which was open.

"I have come, you see," she said. Lady Delucy took both her hands, would have liked to kiss her, but did not dare, so proud was the brilliant face in every line, with the pride of a child who will not be coaxed to smile when it is sad, or when it does not choose. Neither did she, any more than a child would have done, try to conceal her surprise at the style of the room,

so sombre and dull to her, with its dim wainscotting, high chairs, and heavy tables, heaps of books wherever there was room to deposit them, odd volumes from the library, Italian and French novelties in their flimsy wrappers, new plays, new poems, German and Spanish dictionaries, all the newspapers, all the periodicals, all serials illustrated by art. There were certainly a piano and a harp, but the first was closed, and the second covered. There were but two easy seats in the room, reading chairs, in one of which the lady sat, and Geraldine chose a cushion at its foot.

"Diamid would not send his love to you," she began, "though I asked him whether I should bring it."

"Because he had given it all to you—was not that the reason?"

"How could you know he said so? for he did."

"I knew Diamid when he was as young as you are now, he was in my father's house at that time, to be initiated into the mysteries of eastern trade, for though his father was a bookworm, his earlier ancestors were all connected with the east, you know."

"Yes, but papa won't hear of that; it makes him very angry. I suppose Diamid used to talk to you, and that you petted him; he says so."

"I learned his ways, and understood his fancies, he was as wonderful a boy as he is now a wonderful man."

"And when you were married he says you were very generous to his father, who was so poor because no one would risk the publication of his books."

"Generous, never; my husband, who always sought the society of the wise, became acquainted with Diamid's father, and wished him to live near him, because he valued his society so highly."

"And so he went to the house where we live now; but Diamid said it was *your* house, that your husband gave it to you, and that he had no peace till he had earned enough money by his books to buy the house; he could not bear to be indebted, even to you."

"Diamid was always too proud, it is perhaps his only fault."

"But it was not so pretty then as he has made it now."

"No indeed, when I came from London this time, and found all the workmen about it, I suspected something was going to happen.

"Did not Diamid write and tell you about me? he said he tells you every thing."

"No, he did not tell me *that*, but I fancy he was too agreeably engaged to find time to write."

"Were you not surprised to see little me, last night? You could not be more surprised than I was when he asked me to be his wife. *He* too—I should as soon have dreamed that one of the sons of God would see that I was fair, and come from Heaven to seek me, because it was hell without my love." Lady Delucy sighed, but she did not check her, she knew too well the necessary conditions of a nature prematured, all that it will do and have; its erring yet touching exigencies.

"I should like to hear all about you, Geraldine—you must let me call you so—how you first saw Diamid, and how he ventured to think you would suit him. All about you, because concerning him, will please me."

"I'll try, but there seems so much, though there is really so little, so few events in my life I mean. My mother was a Geraldi, and I had

her name, to make my father's name endurable, and now it serves to beautify my beautiful new name, which no one can take from me. I was born in Italy, and came to England for a little while with papa and mamma. But when I was six, and mamma had still no son, my grandmamma Geraldi, who had married her cousin of the same name—he was dead then though—sent for me, she wished to bring me up and leave me her fortune, which is very large. She hated me first for being a girl. Papa could not refuse, for he wanted me to have all the money. I did not care for it then, but now I do, for it will be Diamid's to make use of, and papa's too shall all be his when it is mine. So they sent me back to Italy, and an English governess with me, that I might be brought up like an English girl. I can truly say however, that I have forgotten all she taught me, except the language itself. She was a Protestant, and read me English prayers on a Sunday, and made me hold books of sermons in my hands all day. Then I had a master for French, and one for Latin, and for mathematics and astronomy. I loved none of those things, but hated astronomy most of all. There was an observatory at the top of the

palazzo and there I was stuck to look through a tube, till I could dream of nothing but the shapes of the constellations as they are traced on the globe, crawling all over the sky; and then I had an illness in which I raved about them, so they left off teaching me astronomy, and I had more time to myself. Soon I began to read the books in the library for pleasure—for after all, I understood Italian best, and I found out all the poetry, and soon wrote myself, it is so easy to write poetry in Italian, and in Italy. I improvisated to the statues in the garden, I was Beatrice, I was Laura, I was Leonora D'Esté. Always a woman, and the poets my heroes, yet I burned to be a genius greater than the greatest of all those. But I took care to keep to myself only, my worship of the divinities of song.

"There was only one person in our house who interested me, because of my own age, for I was allowed to be intimate with no young ladies of Catholic families, and there were none round about who were not so. A dear cousin of mine lived with grandmamma; his name was Geraldi Feriani. He was an officer's son, one of the younger branch of his own family—and mamma's first cousin,

not so rich as she in expectations, married him to avoid being put into a convent. Geraldi is just a year older than I—eighteen. He loves me a great deal better than I deserve; even as a child, he spoiled me. Everybody was rather strict besides, grandmamma pretty strict with me, but terribly strict with him. She treated him as she treats her servants, she never addressed him in conversation, and she would not let him have masters, though I wished him to learn with me. She forbade me also to play with him, and I disobeyed her, though I never promised in words that I would obey. The only times we could be alone together was when grandmamma was in the oratory, or with the priest in the chapel. How handsome Geraldi would have been if he had not been so savagely, doggedly sad! he never smiled to show his splendid teeth, and his eyes were half shut up with melancholy. He stamped on the ground when he walked, as if he were crushing down something terrible and strong into it, and often went into pale passions, when he did not speak, but set his teeth tight and ground them, and shuddered from head to foot; till I was afraid he was going mad. That was when he was growing tall, and grandmamma used

to hint that it would not do to keep him idle any longer, yet she never said what he was to be when he grew up, nor he either, he would never speak of himself to *her*.

"One day he had been walking about with that crunching, grinding step, and being in the garden and knowing grandmamma was at her prayers, I called him to come and sit beside me, and when he would not come I pulled him, and *then* he came quietly enough. We sat down, I recollect, on the base of a statue of a nymph with a thorn in her foot, she was holding her foot in her hand and stood in a thicket of roses from which the thorn came I suppose. But the other foot was chipped and a great piece too was broken off the plinth, as we were sitting, on Geraldi's side. Then I said, "I wish I knew what makes you so dreadfully unhappy; is it because grandmamma is cold? She cannot love warmly Geraldi, she cannot love as I love. Do not mind about her, I will love you double, I will love you warmly as the sun and kiss you as softly as the moon when she lays her beam upon your forehead. I will love you more than twenty sisters, and when I am married, we will live together." Of course, Lady Delucy, I only meant that I

should be married some day, to some one or other. But Geraldi turned round on me, black fire seemed to dart out of his eyes, he caught hold of me and pressed me so hard in his arms that I felt his heart beat, and heard it too. 'Geraldine, Geraldine, do you mean that?' 'Of course,' said I, quite startled, as soon as I could get my breath."

"'But do you not see that they will never allow it. We must go away in the dark—far—far.'"

"'Oh Geraldi, I did not mean that I would marry *you*, but that you should live with me and my husband.'"

"Down fell Geraldi, dropped like a stone on the ground, and cut his temple against the sharp broken edge of the plinth. I was horrified, I thought he was killed, but the blood started out of the wound, and I screamed—then remembering how far we were from the house, I tied it up with my handkerchief, meaning to run home for some one directly I had done so, for I thought he would bleed to death. But instead, the bleeding revived him, he opened his eyes, and held my frock so tightly, that I could not stir."

"'Promise me,' he said, between his lips which were purple, and his clenched teeth, 'that you will never, never, *tell* anyone that you refused me—I could not bear that, and if you did I should kill you and myself too, with my father's sword, the same which—'"

"—And there he stopped short, nor could I make him complete the meaning of the sentence."

"My dear child," said Lady Delucy, "pardon me—but should you not keep your cousin's story a secret?—was it not confided to you alone?"

"Oh! no, he did not say so—I have told Diamid. I should not tell *anybody*, of course, but Diamid says he feels for you almost as a mother."

Any but a child in inexperience, at least of women, would have been struck by the expression of the lady's face—very sudden, like the shadow on it of a mental spasm, very short, passing into a light of pale yet patient melancholy. But Geraldine's proud eyes saw only signs of interest, and sympathy with herself.

"My love," said the lady, very tenderly, "would you have liked, if Diamid had not loved you, that any person—that *he*—should have known you loved *him*?"

"Yes, yes," cried Geraldine in glad tones of triumph—"I should have gloried in it, and have wished to die for love of him, and that all the world should know I died so, he the most of all."

"Oh," thought Lady Delucy, "child most of all there, younger in that belief than thy years! Strange fate! desire uncreated, before fulfilment came: Spring born instead of summer, of the spring. A destiny unearthly of doomed delight. Can such last, even for this short life? If not, who would break and scatter one link of the frail and flower-woven chain? Not I."

So she smiled, and sighed together, while Geraldine went on.

"When Geraldi was well again, I said to him, 'Why did you say that they would not let us marry? I do not say we ought, for I don't believe we should suit each other, and besides, I must marry to please papa, because he is ambitious, and I am his only child, and he has been so kind in letting me live in darling Italy; but *why* would they positively prevent it, if we liked?'"

"'I am poor, I am disgraced, I had better be dead, and if I were worthy of my father I soon

should be.' But no more would he tell me, so I was curious, and talked to the servants, with whom I had never been thrown before, but I was determined I would know. I made out that grandmamma took Geraldi out of charity; certainly the English proverb that charity is cold, received its interpretation through her. Well, Geraldi's father was never a favourite of his mother's family, he became by conviction a republican, and tried to turn his sword against the king, who had treated some of his associates with dreadful injustice and cruelty. I don't know the particulars, but Geraldi's father was discovered in his attempt, and imprisoned. To evade his probable fate he fell upon his sword, and died in torment. For the double offence of treason and suicide, his child suffered the loss of all his property, except the sword, which some daring colleague, in prison too, managed to steal and gave Geraldi. Geraldi has buried it in the ground in its case; I only know the spot, for he made me promise not to tell even Diamid. The Geraldis had always treated his father as a hair-brained underling, one who had infringed on the honour of the family; so conservative, even of bad things, are they. I loved

Geraldi better than ever after I knew all about his troubled life, yet I loved less to be near him, and I strove my utmost to conquer that aversion, because I thought it cruel and ungenerous when he had no one else to love him. I was excessively hurt and angry with grandmamma, yet dared not say so, for fear she should send him quite away, and at last I almost worked myself up into a belief that I ought to marry him, and that when I was old enough I would try, perhaps I might like him better then, I thought.

"Papa and mamma always came to spend the autumn with us, and returned to England in time for the opening of parliament. Last autumn papa wrote word that he should bring a friend with him, and that I was to be introduced at table—I had never appeared yet, when there were any strangers. The day came; the courier came to say that they were just at hand. Then grandmamma took me into her own hands and dressed me for the first time in her life. To my surprise and horror she put on me a lace frock—a dreadful thing from Paris, low in the throat, with short sleeves—and what was worse, she trimmed me all over with jewels, till I looked like an idol

of the Virgin. I did not dare to complain, however, and indeed I felt it did not really signify, for I was not at all excited about the stranger they said was coming. All day that day too, Geraldi was nowhere to be seen. At last the time came, grandmamma went down, dressed grandly, but not frightfully as I was, and she led me in her hand. Of course I wanted to run and kiss papa and mamma, but she pinched my hand so tight I could not get it free. And when I got into the room—an immense room, I could not at first see what the stranger was like. I looked all round, while papa and mamma embraced me, and at last saw some person in a corner—next moment papa took me to him. But what was strange, he only said *my* name by way of introduction, not *his*. It was Diamid, however, looking so beautiful, but oh, so weary! And when he said "I am very happy to see you Lady Geraldine," so kindly, just as if I were a child (and indeed I suppose I was, for I wanted to put my arms round him and kiss him) I thought for the first time that English was, after all, not so harsh a tongue as I had always believed. But the next moment Diamid glanced at my dress—I saw he thought it ridiculous, for there was a

little baby-smile just at the corners of his mouth; and I burned with shame and indignation. I never reflected in those days, but acted on impulse as naturally as I breathed, and I ran with all my speed out of the room; I did not even hear them call after me, I suppose they were too much amazed, for no one had seen Diamid's glance except myself. I rushed into grandmamma's room and tore off the lace rubbish and diamonds, flinging them into her press, and then I let down all my hair in curls just as I had worn it before grandmamma rolled it up and dressed it, and as I wear it now; and I put on one of my old dresses, made like this which I have on. Nobody sent after me, and I staid there awhile, and at last went down into the library, got something to eat from one of the servants, and then settled myself to read, but I could neither read nor settle, so I went out on the terrace, and walked up and down very fast—I was so excited I did not know what to do, so afraid and yet glad—all the world seemed new; and yet I felt it was only because that stranger was in the house, only because I longed for him to see me again, in my own natural habit, that he might think me pretty, as I knew he would then. Presently they all

came out to walk, I had expected them, because the evening was so warm; I walked slower; soon papa came up to me. He was very angry, I could see that, and yet I did not care, for Diamid was close behind him. Papa began to scold in a very low voice, and in Italian."

"'I am much displeased with you,—how dared you go away when I ordered you were to be present at dinner? and how dared you change your dress, which I had ordered too—I am astonished, I am amazed—' But Diamid interrupted him.

"'Stay,' he said, 'she should be enshrined and worshipped as that rare thing, a woman who understands herself, and who, unstained by the vanity which clothes all beauty with corruption, has courage to repudiate artifice; as sincere as she is fair.' Papa looked astounded, he had no idea Diamid understood Italian. And so ashamed for him to have heard what he said to me."

"Why ashamed?" asked Lady Delucy, assuming ignorance, for she could not believe so young a girl would know.

"I did not know then,—Diamid told me afterwards, he tells me all I ask him. Papa wished Diamid to marry me, and to seem so anxious that I should appear in full dress was a British blunder, which no

one could detect more easily, nor mock more delicately, than Diamid. Papa had chosen to admire Diamid because he is what papa calls a self-made man, meaning he can do all he chooses, and *cares* to do the utmost, because so ambitious. Papa is ambitious, but has a small mind which can only move in a circle. I had heard all my life of Diamid Albany, but never for a moment then, imagined this stranger was the same. So Diamid walked with me on the terrace; he talked to me so beautifully, so kindly, yet so admiringly; I was proud, I grew prouder every moment, and felt as if I grew,—I do believe I was a woman grown that night. The next day we talked again; how easy I was with him,—yet he was the first person to whom I had ever looked up. He drew out every secret feeling, only by looking me in the face, as the air draws out the perfumes of the flowers, and the sun draws up the dew. I told him all about Geraldi, and actually asked him whether I should not do right to marry him. Diamid said earnestly, 'You must not think of it, my child. Small natures in making sacrifices become sublime; great minds by the diminution of natural happiness, turn into slaves instead of the rulers they should

be." Proud as I was when he called me woman, I was happier now that he called me 'child.'

"Next day papa brought me a number of books and told me that I was to read them, that it was time I should—that everybody must be able to say they had read them, and talk about them. I wondered why, but not long. I never was averse to reading, except books on science. Everything but science seemed treated of in these. There were dramas, prose romances, satires, essays, theories sketched and typified, and I felt sure that only *one* produced them all. There was no name on the title pages; you know Diamid never put his name till it was famous; this was the first edition of his works, papa had procured it on purpose, that I might not know. For some days I did not see Diamid, nor papa, they went out on excursions, and I was left at home. I had read all the books through by the time they returned, and was reading them again. I remember so well *that* day, as well as those in Heaven must remember the day they died. I was reading 'The Lotus Valley.' You remember that one, of course?"

"I do remember it, but perhaps I do not know it so well as you do, it was the earliest of

the works he published,"—"Yes, his Primavera, this first bloom of the spring of genius, what a blossom too! I was reading the passage where Renaro locks up the child Inesilla whom he has received as ransom for her father, in the court of the Hareem. I know that passage by heart."

"'You cannot escape,' said Renaro; 'you are entirely in my power; with a word of mine I can release you, by an act detain you here for ever.' 'I do not care,' replied the child, 'nothing is of any consequence to me now. But do kill that pretty poor butterfly which I caught this morning and was playing with when you carried me away. I hid it in the hollow of my hand, but you pressed my hand so tightly that it was hurt,—poor me! I crushed the butterfly, and when you let my hand go and I opened it, it fell upon the floor. It cannot fly, it has lost its beautiful soft dust, and its rose and purple spots are quivering with pain. Oh, crush it with your foot, which is heavier than mine! I have no slippers, and my tread is too light to kill it, I should make it suffer more.' Renaro strode three steps along the marble floor, and crushed the butterfly; its ruined wings

lay like bruised petals of a storm-scattered iris. He turned to the child; he had put on not an angry frown. 'So you have lost your Psyche,' he said, 'and you are mine.' 'But you cannot crush *me*,' she answered.

"'Then Renaro heaved a great sigh which shook the pomegranate blossoms. He went out hastily, and left Inesilla there. When he returned she was asleep by the fountain in the midst, the sound of the water as a song of eternal kisses, had lulled her sorrow till it dreamed of joy. Renaro approached her with stillness; his feet unshod, he held in his hand the gem-encrusted slippers, lest their sound on the marble should awaken her. Her long hair had fallen into the water, and floated wide there like golden weeds; Renaro lifted it from the water, wrung it from its dangerous moisture, and dried it on the folds of his robe, so gently, all so tenderly, that she smiled in her sleep, in a dream that her mother was toying with her hair, as in days when they dressed each other with flowers, and made a play of love. Renaro laid that yet damp hair back from her brow, lest its chill should cross her sweet visions with the cold dream of death; then gathering pomegranate

flowers and the jasmines which had come from her own land, he laid them in her lap, and glided from the court again, again sighing, this time not loud enough to shake the blossoms, for fear of rudely stirring a sweeter blossom still.'"

"While I read, Diamid came behind me, and looked over my shoulder. I felt his breath on my neck, I would not move, lest he should go away. When I arrived at the end of the last passage, I was going to turn a page. 'Are not those two passages contradictory to each other? Critics say so, and doomed the book to oblivion long ago; but it is not buried, nevertheless, I suppose because there are so many fools left in the world,' he said.

"'No, no!' I said, very eagerly, 'they are not contradictory passages, they explain each other. He did exactly what she asked him, and did it to prove his allegiance, which is further proved by the interest of a man so stern and inflexibly drawn, in the affair of a child and a butterfly. It is a delicate and subtle touch, quite in keeping with the gentleness of his demeanour afterwards. I agree with all this author writes, and understand all too, which is more than I can say for any other English

writer. But he is not an English *thinker*—he only subdues the language to his uses, a stubborn instrument, but so entirely his slave. Ah! I understand him, and wish I could see him, for I know him without seeing him. I am not like owls which see best in the dark, or bats which love to fly at twilight; I can only look at the light, and soar towards the sun.' I don't know what rhapsody I was going to utter, for his presence gave me the gift of language, as the music-god of the north, Sprömkari,—to all those children who see him in his blue depths, playing on the eternal harp,—gives the gift of music. But Diamid touched my forehead with one of his hands, I turned to him straight, I looked at him. He said, in tones that seemed to pierce my brain, 'Thou understandest *all*, in understanding *me*!' And before I could breathe again, before I could even wonder, what he meant——"

Here the Lady and Geraldine started both, and both exclaimed, 'What sound was that?' It did not cease, but swelled with a volume and a voice neither of the wind nor thunder. It was music certainly, imperious and insurgent, brimming far over, and flooding its own source.

"The organ!" cried Lady Delucy, "the old organ in the hall; but who can be playing, and, above all, to make it sound *so*? I must go and see." And she left Geraldine, and went.

CHAPTER VI.

Though Geraldine had been nurtured in one of the kingdoms of the glory of song, she had heard little music, and understood less. For a moment or two, her idolising taste for her husband's deeds and words, had been wounded by her companion's putting them by so easily for a fresh and a strange interest. But still the sound grew, surging stronger and richer, till the diapason woke sympathetic vibrations in the strings of the closed piano, and made the chords of the covered harp shudder, as if brushed by a hand too rude. Then Geraldine's heart, filled with the passion of happiness; it penetrated, and seemed to create a new desire, which was not for love to convict

of some imperious need unfelt before. Soon she was in the hall too.

The organ in the hall was very old, and not of master-build. Not a gleam of gilding remained on the pipes, from whose points cobwebs hung and fluttered, and the cover for the keys had been lost so many years, that deposit after deposit of dust had fallen between their cracks, half choking the sound of some, and dumbing altogether not a few. Still before the organ hung its curtain, once red, now rust-hued velvet, and the rings which held it to the rods were rusty too. In fact for years the instrument had been considered useless, and only the conservative pride of the house had suffered it to remain standing. Yet this wreck, this ruin, this body from which one would have said the soul had fled, seemed in this hour to have its mechanical power renovated as if by its long rest, and a soul more great than its own possessed it newly.

When Lady Delucy went into the hall, the first thing she saw was a group of her own servants, one of whom was dispensing gossip, that salt of servants' lives, to the rest. Being the senior of the party, he grimaced with fear when he

beheld his mistress. She only inquired, however, who was playing?

"A wild-looking, wandering sort of a person," was the reply,—and he knocked at the front entrance door, just a single knock, as sharp and sudden as a shot, and when I opened it, this person walks in, and asks for *you*, my lady, not like a gentleman's servant, but as a impostor who wishes to pass for a gentleman. He must be a impostor of course, or would have knocked a double knock, acting *as* a gentleman. I says, not of course thinking it mattered whether he was kept or not, 'you can stand inside while I enquire whether my lady will have anything to say to you;' knowing there was no plate in the hall except the fire-irons. 'But,' says I, 'give me your card with your name, or I cannot think of troubling my lady.' He gives me this scrap of paper, and who could read *that?*—it's not writing at all! While I am gone to see whether your ladyship is at home to any one of that class, he spies out (I suppose) the horgan, and I know no more than that I and the rest within hear-shot—run in to remove him; but you see, my lady, believing him to be a lunatic rather than a impostor why naturally we couldn't agree among

us to disturb him, knowing no one *but* a lunatic could play so on the horgan—*that* horgan in particular."

Lady Delucy took the paper and read in a grotesque German hand the name of a person who had stopped the carriage the night before. Now Lady Delucy had not forgotten him; she told him to call on her that day, when she left him with his mother, to be cared for at the village inn—the night before. But she had appointed four o'clock, as she had fixed employment for the morning—engagements, however, which Geraldine had been permitted to break through after all. But Lady Delucy was not one to be severe upon artists for infringement of social rules, or want of punctuality; upon *real* artists rather, for she gave no quarter to mimic ones.

The voice of her servant worried her, as it jarred against the noble music; she sent him and all the rest away, and then stood still to listen. As for the servants, they vanished precipitately, not without noise, which such persons usually manage to make, most of all when they are trying to be quiet. Once in their own place, the seasoning of their discourse grew still more stinging.

"My lady's ways and whimsies is not strange, being met with as she was by my lord. I hope and pray this strange man won't harm her —but to leave her all alone with him! Supposing he was to go into one of his lunacies while here?"

"*I* only hope he is no more than a lunatic," observed a younger member of the retinue, one who had shared the quite modern benefits of a course of popular education. All the others looked up to him, as coming from London, and having attended lectures on all subjects, occult and familiar.

"What could be worse?" they asked, "what did he mean?"

"I don't mean anything, for I don't know, and without knowing there's no meaning; but I do remember hearing of the fiddler who had only one string to his fiddle, which the devil screwed on for him, which was shown in this, that if any other fiddler happened to play on it (but he was always much against their doing it), why they only made it squeak and set your teeth on edge; and yet he, the fiddler it belonged to, could play music and keep your mouths open as well as your ears, on that very one string, soft and loud equally."

"What was his name?" asked one of the housemaids.

"I can't exactly remember, but it was something like Pagan, and a Pagan he was, or worse, which I believe myself. I believe in the devil, I think it a part of religion, nor am I a dissenter —I renounced the devil at the font."

"But how could *he* be the devil, if the devil fastened on the string?"

"Is not that what I was wishing to bring you to? Do not fiddlers fasten on their own strings? Well, that proves *him* to have been the devil, and the devil, we are expressively told, walks about seeking whom he may devour, and what more likely but that being a spirit, and able to change his shape, he should have taken *fust* to the fiddle, and take to the horgan *now*?'

"But still people *have* played on that horgan," observed a sceptical scullery maid, who, in the excitement of the time, had been allowed to approach her superiors as she was not wont. "Or else what was it made for, and put up in the hall?"

"Certainly people has played on it, but clothes wear out, and so do horgans. Handel, who wrote those long pieces called oritorias, one of

which I heard in London, a Christmas piece called Messiah. *He* played on that horgan once, more than one hundred years ago. And to show its age, the long parts of the keys which are made black in our proper church horgans, are made white in that one, and the white parts of the keys black."

"Ah," said the old porter, who had spoken to his mistress, "I recollect once, when my little lady was a tiny roaming thing of six or so, she come roaming into the hall one night when I was putting logs on the hall fire. My little lady, says 'Prout,' she says, as pretty as she always speaks, 'will you just make a little wind come into the organ? I want to try and put down one of those keys. Mamma says they are too heavy, and that I cannot; but if I could, it would surprise mamma very much, would it not, Prout?'

"Of course I did it, with pleasure, and I declare I think it pretty near as hard to play the bellors as to play the horgan, at all events I *did* play the bellors, and my little lady could *not* play the horgan. Not with all the strength of her little fists piled one on the other, could she get down *one* note. I remember then my little lady

says, 'It's no use, Prout, but I thank you,' she always said *I* thank you, so grand and yet so pretty. Then I come round in front, and she is playing *with* the keys, if she can't upon them. She calls the long white keys ladies' coffins, and the black parts marble pavements, and says, 'no wonder they are dead, being made to listen to music, and the music being dead.' And she finishes by rubbing her pretty little fingers all along the dust and smearing it all over her face. And her nurse comes, snatches her up, and scolds me rarely."

"I give you a last proof," here broke in the devil-ridden. "The devil and no mistake! There is no one blowing the bellows, and Prout is well aware as I am, that no one besides the devil could make wind for himself."

"Then my lady might be whisked out of window in a flame of sulphureous fire, like Lady Hatton in the play."

"That was because Lady Hatton sold herself to him to get a sweetheart;—my lady living all by herself is safe enough for that."

"She may live all alone by herself, but she sees people sometimes—and just before he went abroad, Mr. Albany was in and out in her own

room, through the door in the wall—not coming round the right way of the front entrance."

To this theory the majority only gave consent by silence.

And was the lady astonished that the organ, without wind to feed it, should give out a greater than its own voice? She did not think about it at all, nor find time to wonder, she remembered no more the actual decay, thus repaired the dim pipes, filled fresh with golden tongues. So masterly was the hand that thus created, that she almost feared the masterhood of the creating presence. She would have doubted the possibility of the player's being so young as the person who had given her the letter, but for the fact that the name on the scrap of paper in her hand was the name mentioned in the letter from one she had benefitted in his neediest days, who now commended to her notice another needy aspirant. All at once, while she was lost in the improvisation just as one progresses spiritually in a dream, not knowing the end, enrapt in expectation; the dream broke off short: just as in a rude awakening from sleep.

"Are you tired?" asked a voice which sounded after the music, strangely harsh and rude. Then

the lady heard a rustling, and steps, she was sure that some second person moved behind the organ, coming forward to the front; still the curtains were undrawn; it was not her the voice addressed.

No longer fearing to dissipate the dream, she walked up to the curtains, and very gently drew them aside. Behind them, as she expected, sat the youth; beside him now stood his mother, who on seeing Lady Delucy fell into a nervous fluster, which entirely deprived her of utterance, though it made her cough spasmodically, for many moments As for the player, he had dropped his eyes gloomily, like a moping owl in the sunshine, and his hair, which was in colour and texture not unlike the down of the owl's breast, fell forward(as if recently shaken) over the brows; so completely covering that crown of the countenance, the forehead, that the lady could not the least guess at its structure, nor even trace its size. By the fresh and all-revealing daylight she perceived that the face she scanned was in fact, and as the world would have decided, irremediably plain; to her it was interesting for other reasons, but most of all because of that same harmonious ugliness, for each feature being

plain by itself, the effect was far more agreeable to an artistic vision than might be a face with one lovely feature, distorted by the ugliness of the rest to the discord unavoidable in such a case.

The skin of this face was colourless, but neither white nor fair; of a dry sallow tint, which attested a condition of bodily ill-health. Years upon years of experience beyond the natural portion of so young a life, had folded too straitly the thin line of the lips; there was still a charm for which the lady had an eye, in the expression absolutely unsensual, which the severity of the line imparted; while yet the face retained the whole burden of the passion of youth, unshared, unmitigated—virgin yet. The lady interpreted all these meanings, for she was a student of such whenever they presented themselves, but they would have been veiled from other eyes by a prevailing aspect of despair, increased by the expression of the figure, more sharply lined than even the face, more drooping still, the torture of restrained restlessness in its rigid attitude.

The lady's eyes filled with the light, if not the tears of pity—but she took care he should not see them. She stood behind him, and soon her kindly smile reassured the mother; it struck

her, that she could not speak English easily, and she addressed her in her own tongue.

"Your son has a wonderful talent for music," she observed. The son did not stir, nor move his eyes.

"Oh," began the woman fluently enough, after the fashion of her class, when once their tongues are loosed. "Oh, I do not know what to say, how to apologise, for my great misconduct in coming in. You had ordered him to come alone, my lady, and he would not wait till the hour you had appointed; I followed him close as I always do when he walks about, for fear he should fall into a ditch, or walk straight against a wall. But when he arrived I waited outside, as it was right for me to do. In a minute he opened the door, and pulled me in; his arm was so strong, and his eyes shone so, that I was afraid of his having a fever of the brain, for the doctors warned me never to cross him, not when he was four years old and broke all the wine glasses large and small, by putting water into them, and playing cathedral chimes. And not liking the sounds he made so well as those chimes—the finest in all Hanover—he took the little stick and smashed them one by one."

While she so ran on, the son looked up and the lady did not see how he glanced at his mother, because she stood on the other side, but the glance checked her tongue. Then he turned to the lady, who smiled; but it was evident to her, that at once he had detected the pity that softened her eyes, for a livid haughtiness fell upon his face, like the shadow of a sultry cloud; it was with it as with a clear complexion when it blushes, divided between pride and shame. The eager voice, deepened from its usual harsh medium, seemed to convey that haughtiness to another sense than sight. "The lady could not blame me for handling her organ—*I* could not have handled it too long."

"Herman, Herman!" cried the mother again in affright.

"Lady, I pray you, forgive him, he is so wild upon music that he has no respect of persons; he has made an idol of it, and it prevents his giving honour where honour is due both to God and man."

The lady noticed a twang in these last few words very unusual among associations of her country, how common soever in this. She saw too, how they grated on the son's ear, but still he turned not to speak, his mother could perceive this;

bitterly the thin lips curled, but no bitter answer came.

"Your son is quite right to say he could not play too long, I am only astonished that he can play at all upon an instrument so unworthy of him, and so completely worn out."

"Do you know?" he exclaimed speaking harshly, eagerly again, "do you know what it shows, what it proves, that I can play on it? Do you know that it is not only bad because it is old, but that the day it was set up it ought to have been pulled down again, and broken into bits and sticks, and made into a bonfire? And the maker should have been roasted in the midst, if indeed, any fire could have been hot enough to burn through so thick a skull—except the hottest——"

"Herman! Herman!" broke in the mother, and he left the dooming sentence unfinished —— still persisted,

"Lady, do you know what it is to make music from a lump like this?"

"It is genius," said the lady, for want of a better word.

"It is creation. It is what made the world; it is what he who made all things only gives the lords of men."

"Herman! Herman!"

"You have said so, mother. Why did you give me the name, lord-man?—"

"Hush—thou knowest, all know who do not shut their ears, that all are alike before God."

"But not before man," he muttered. The lady came again to his relief.

"Is the organ your favourite, your own instrument?" she asked. He looked full at her, and his small grey eyes filled as it were from *behind* the iris with pale, gleaming fire—the true magnetic light. A sudden power seized him to express in *words*.

"Your question could only have been thought of, and asked with a view to a reply, by a *woman*. Oh lady, women are very useful to musicians in all but the highest,—in dramatic parts. They are *divine*; in divine dramatic parts, equally the *World-divine*,—the Olympian,—parts of majestic passion, or sublimated crime;—and the *Spiritual-divine*, —parts angelic, of tender chastity, or all sacrificing love. Women are priceless, or rather slaves to be purchased at any cost, by musicians for the use of music. But as for women being musicians themselves,—why, the pianoforte was made for women—that is quite enough."

"Made for women?" interrupted Lady Delucy, amused rather than surprised. "Yes, made for them, an invention patented by benevolent persons on their account. How many women, answer me, play *other* instruments, instruments for the orchestra, as well as most women play the pianoforte?"

"They are the exceptions, certainly," said the lady.

"Exceptions! and exceptions among *women*, who all imitate each other!—few enough are such exceptions. The pianoforte is a toy, and for the most part women treat their pianofortes just as they treated their toys when they were children, petted them and knocked them about, often spoiled them altogether, now and then swaddled them in wool, and *did not* play with them at all."

"That is true, certainly!"

"And as true, that when women are not satisfied with their own rights in art, it happens as it does when dissatisfied with their own rights in life as women; they try to scale the heights, they bruise and break their frail frames against the rocks; and if a woman, so trying physically to attain what she need not

covet—for spiritually she is able to embrace it—if such a woman does not perish, self-hurled to destruction, she remains an exception, as you say, a monster; soon she hates herself." The lady was surprised, but she gloried in anything that resembled an encounter of two minds agreed to differ.

"How then?" she asked, "Cecilia was herself a Saintess."—

"Madam, Cecilia was unmarried—that is sufficient to prove her beyond all women; an angel. Cecilia was a type. We call all Art feminine, because it aspires."

"Woman reaches out her arms to man, the truer to nature and to beauty, the more fully she opens her arms, still always to the One, that shall fill and satisfy, not to the many, who pass through them to elude her. So does Art—above all, Art-Musical, stretch in all her strength to God. And as God is infinite, phantoms of perfection all bright with the brightness of His presence, pass one by one through the dreams of Art, they elude her embrace only to give room to fresh and pure celestial visions; we call that Creation, it is the progress of a Soul. Finite while human, the faithful man with his single

impression, fills the arms of the faithful woman. That woman is slave, not child of Art, I give you a proof. Possessing what you call genius, she will throw it by, cast it to the winds—nay, lay it at the feet of the man she loves, and bid him tread it into the dust of things forgotten; if only his opinions or pursuits, agree not with the habits of Genius. I grant that a woman may have genius, —most unhappy mind, and thirsty soul! though I would have her calmly wise, fit to worship as she is meet to love. A woman may be a poetess of the holy passion, she may discuss in books what men's natures dare never expose to themselves, much less to others. She may clothe heroism and grace with the material immortality of sculpture. She may paint—that is to say she may commune with the colour-art as nuns in convents keep up their communication with their celestial bridegroom; by yearnings, by fastings, by self-imposition and perpetually-recurring disappointment. But music!—Song, indeed, is a wreath of woman; it crowns with unearthly loveliness her fairest charms, it *gives* her beauty if she has none else; it gives her wings if she is pure, and she soars before death into the nearest Heaven, and drops on us influences,

holier than the star-influences, dreams of passion incorruptible. But song is not the whole of music, it is a ray only of the rainbow, or rather, the most artless form of musical expression, giving just such tender beauty to Art when it assists it, as infancy gives human nature."

The lady ceased to be surprised, she was absorbed in growing interest. The shrill tones had mounted to a lofty pitch, so that their metallic clarity struck through; the face changed as visibly as an autumn landscape when the sun pierces the fog that mantled it—the grey eyes fixed, and delicate lights played over them like the steady electric smiles of a fervent summer night. When he ceased speaking, of course the lightnings faded, the eyes grew dim, yet the face retained its brightness somewhat, and the hands quivered silently over the keys, though they formed no clustering chord. The lady grew actually impatient if he did not play, she must hear him go on speaking.

"Then you did not tell me which instrument you love best to play—though you told me (and taught me) a good deal besides, which, perhaps, it is good to know, that we may not think too highly of ourselves."

"I did not tell *you* to take you down. I have no instrument, as the cant is, and the ignorant boast; God be thanked for that! Unless the musician can play with all instruments for his own purposes, he is but the instrument of music himself. Only so far as he commands them all, is he himself music—least finite image of the Eternal."

"You do not then satisfy yourself in playing?"

"That time has long been past with me, or I should not be here. I dream now—like the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters, so stir my shadows, dim shapes of sound, across the chaos of my fathomless intention."

"I knew not," murmured the lady half unconsciously, when he paused again—"that musicians could so speak—could so discourse of what alone they understand; it is strange and new."

The mother, who had been nearly asleep during a rhapsody which was like a sermon in a foreign language to her ear, now woke up and yawned. A sort of shiver shook his frame, as the cross influence smote him, and he sank into the old attitude, with more than the old restraint

CHAPTER VII.

While Lady Delucy was talking to her new and singular acquaintance, she had forgotten in her artistic enthusiasm, her other friend, scarcely of less recent introduction. Geraldine had listened to the music first with wonder and delight; then with mingling wonder whether Diamid, who admired scarcely any playing, would admire this. But when it ceased, she grew weary, and finding Lady Delucy did not return to look for her, she persuaded herself it was quite time for her to go home, that she might be ready to greet her husband on his return. She left a little note on the table in the room where she had been talking to Lady

Delucy, explaining this, and bidding her farewell.

The lady was glad to see her daughter and Colonel Lyonhart come into the hall, for the pause in the player's behaviour made her nervous; she scarcely knew what to say or do next. She left him and hastened to meet Elisabeth. "Have you heard anything while you were in the garden?" she asked her—"young Rodomant has been playing. No praise can exaggerate his merits, Schenk has spoken well."

"We were too far from the house, mamma, we went to the village, for we thought he and his mother would want a lodging; there are two rooms to let in the white cottage."

"I do not know yet, I have not seen him *alone* yet. I should like him to stay *here*—" Elisabeth's smile checked her. For Elisabeth could recall several melancholy, though diverting instances of her mother's excessive benevolence. One that of a gentleman who spoke broken English, and announced himself as a German artist, carrying with him a portfolio of magnificent foreign sketches and a letter of introduction from one of the princes of German artists, but who could not sketch, because he

had broken his arm (still in a sling) in the overturn of a diligence. He was lodged and boarded sumptuously for a fortnight, at the end of which time there appeared in the *Times* an advertisement of that same portfolio, the actual property of the artist, who was said to have written the letter. An exceedingly large reward was offered for the sketches if restored; and Lady Delucy hastened to the rooms she had appropriated to her visitor; but found him already gone—he had received the information before she did, having taken his copy of the paper himself, out of the letter box, the instant it was deposited therein by the postman—and being aware that Lady Delucy seldom looked at hers till after breakfast. Not only had he gone, but though she wrote to the artist directly, she had to send to town for his address, and her friend reached him *first*, and made his story appear so plausible that he received the reward. He was at last caught, with the forged letter still upon his person—but, he had then spent the money. Another time Lady Delucy had done a great deal for a man who played upon the harp, very well too, but in the streets, and who prevailed upon her innocence, to believe

that his father, a man of social position, had turned him out of doors, because he persisted in the study of art. She procured him a good many pupils besides her own daughter, and one morning when he was left alone in the dining room, for about five minutes, he pocketed and vanished with six golden spoons and a silver pap-boat, enriched with emeralds, out of the side-board closet.

Lady Delucy knew she had often been deceived, but her benevolence had in those cases misled her judgment, being first excited. In this instance, her judgment had been formed first. She had not been prepossessed, nor did she know the youth was absolutely poor; she thought he only wanted patronage. Her daughter's smile however made her very anxious that Elisabeth should herself judge of the power and the skill which so enchanted her. It was evident that Elisabeth only went to please her mother; but she did go with her to the organ—having given Colonel Lyonhart a look, which asked him to go too.

"My daughter," said Lady Delucy, "wishes to renew her acquaintance with you—she scarcely saw you last night."

Elisabeth's sweet smile and expressive eyes,

were sweetest and most eloquent for the musician, just because she did not admire him at all; she pitied his pallid and rugged countenance, his writhing restlessness awakened newly, his despairing expression, that almost implied self-disgust. Now, to Lady Delucy's extreme annoyance, the gloom which had filmed his eyes, melted not the least, it overspread his whole countenance, and an unutterable awkwardness possessed his frame; he stooped, he shrugged, he shook himself like some wild animal disturbed in its lair by man, and ended by burying his face in his hands, and placing his elbows on the key-board. So he stayed awhile; but only while his mother was again curtseying and apologising. She began to cry at last;—and then he looked up, and said in his harshest tones, yet not without respect in his manner to Lady Delucy,

"Am I to play any more? because if not, I must go." How respectful soever he was to her, he turned his back completely on Elisabeth and her lover.

"I wish my daughter to hear you play, if you are not tired." For she hoped his playing would dissipate the disagreeable effect he had personally produced.

"I am very willing," he answered, "but she," pointing to his mother, "has not strength to blow any longer; and without wind I can but make these keys rattle like old bones. However, to the ears of asses, and some men, it would be as agreeable and profitable if I rattled them as if I played." And he rattled them with his knuckles.

Lady Delucy was very glad that Colonel Lyonhart, who understood almost every Oriental dialect, was profoundly ignorant of all European languages but English. She sent in all haste for one of the servants, who came; but would *not* have dared to come had his ladies been alone; for Colonel Lyonhart was looked upon by the household at large in the same sort of light as a policeman—an infallible protector against natural or diabolical dangers.

Sorely did the lady repent her ignorance of a phenomenon of character she had not happened to meet with before. Rodomant put out the whole power of the organ, and laying his hands on as many keys as they would cover, commenced a series of awful noises, hideous and ridiculous; yet various as the screams of night-birds, the squalls of grimalkins, the howls of beasts, the groans of those in the extremity of

sea-sickness, whole masses of flats, sharps, and naturals—those next door neighbours, and bitter enemies, held on together, till the ear was set as it were on edge, like the teeth by a virulent acid. At last the bolt of musical revenge fell, in a crash of dissonances, a chaotic strum too loud to be endured; and every one fled the field, *except* Lady Delucy, who indeed could not move for laughing, and whose first anger had subsided into the sympathy of one who had been the most delicate of comic actresses, and drawn smiles to a thousand lips by the least dimpling relaxation of her serene soft face. Rodomant's mother ran away first; then Elisabeth, who stayed as long as she could bear it, because in her simplicity she really thought he was playing his best; and who, when she did move, glided so gently away that no one heard her in the midst of the other noise. Charles Lyonhart, following close beside her, slammed the hall door with his whole strength, in a sort of heroic rage, because Elisabeth's ears had been so tortured, and her sweet grace insulted by one—upon whom he conferred various epithets in Hindostanee, which it would be difficult even at Billingsgate to parallel in the English language.

With the banging of the door the noise of the organ ceased. Rodomant looked up in the lady's face with a droll, satisfied smile; not arch, for the lips were not curved enough to assume such an expression, but confiding and mild withal;—while he touched here and there a note, or gathered and let go again a chord, softly and fitfully as a butterfly now brushes a rose, now lights upon a pansy.

"I have sent him away!" he said triumphantly.

"You were very cruel," said the lady "for he has never heard music such as yours, and it would have done him good. I also particularly desired that my daughter should be enchanted, as she might have been if you had done yourself the smallest possible justice."

"I was not thinking about her being enchanted—I only could not have *him* near me; and as to playing, that was good enough for him. He is a person who considers music a craft for vagabonds, half wits, and men who faint at the sight of blood. He does not even know what art means, but what he understands by it he despises. He thinks us all dissipated, extravagant, and vain as women. We are voluptuous, spendthrifts, weeds of the devil's growing in God's great field—

the world. You cannot contradict me, it is all true that I have said."

It was so true that she could not contradict him. Charles Lyonhart, like most men first in their own worldly order and clinging to a worldly profession with a tenacity renown has riveted, was ignorant of the claims of those whose profession, if it can be so called, is eminently unworldly, how dependent soever its votaries be on the world for sustenance. As little worldly wise, less worldly-prudent, and of no use in the world at all, he esteemed all artists of every class. Lady Delucy had spent many hours in vainly contrasting this prejudice in his mind, and had given it up at last through the conviction that it must arise from a want of passion in his nature. But that was before her daughter's betrothal, which convinced her shortly that whatever might be his prejudices, he was persistent and passionate enough. Yet he did not care even for Elisabeth's playing, and he tried not to yawn, and tried hard to listen, when she sang great foreign scenas. He liked her simplest ballads best, still preferred the kind accents of her silver speech to her most golden singing.

"Will you stay here and play, while I speak to

your mother—and will you let me speak afterwards to *you?*"

"Do not listen, lady, to anything she says about me—she tells untruths; that are truths to her, however, for she believes them. About herself she can talk—there is little in her history; and still less, alas! in mine."

Then Lady Delucy took the woman to the room where she had talked to Geraldine. Directly they were shut in, the woman began, as the lady expected, to cry and complain. "It was so sad, so trying," she said, "to have a child who was not like other children—who cannot work regularly to gain an honest living—cannot settle into regular habits, and marry happily in his own country. If he had been quite an idiot, he would always have been a baby to her, and she should not have suffered half so much as now she did. He was always making enemies, and quarrelling with his friends; and now, after throwing away such fine chances in Germany, to come to England and disgrace himself the first thing, by placing himself on an equality with a high lady—a great lady,—and she, his poor mother, obliged to seem to encourage him, because she dare not cross him, lest as the doctor said, those convulsions might

come back, which he had when he was a child."

"You are quite right," said the lady, directly she could get in a word—"to take care of him, and it would be very wrong to cross him. I will tell you why: your son is not my equal in music, he is my superior. And once I was not the lady of this house—I was an actress on the English stage, until my noble husband married me." She meant to mend matters, but she had made them worse: the woman shrank from her with awe and terror in her face; she was evidently one of those —fewer abroad than at home, but too many anywhere, who have been bred in superstitious horror of actors and actresses, a superstition perhaps the last remaining in full strength, of the fine antique stock, of whom witches are the maternal ancestors. But the lady's sweet smile and countenance which glowed with goodness carried a countercharm to the artificial dread.

"Well! so kind and great a lady had been in so humble a position, that it was wonderful she had no pride—could excuse her son's behaviour."

"But your son is a good son to you, is he not?" the lady asked.

"He certainly never told lies, and he ate very

little and drank no beer, and was not gay; he hated all amusements. But so wild, so irregular, so rude to everybody, particularly his betters."

"Was his father a musician?" asked Lady Delucy.

"Oh no, a shoemaker, but a very good one, with a fine business. Herman would never learn it, nor anything. I am now sorry we sent him to school, for then he could not have taken up the whims he did about learning. Then, another vexation happened. He was so clever that he went beyond all the scholars. His father would have sent him to college, and he might have been a Professor, but he said, 'No, I know as much as I want of those things. I will read for myself.' He spent his mornings in a great library, and we thought perhaps he was writing a book, that might be a good thing, to have his books at Leipsig fair. But one day I found his papers, they were not book-papers, but music, pages on pages of it. And as he was out, I burned them, because I thought it would force him to take up with some serious pursuit. For all this time he was living on our hands. When he came home."—

"Oh," said the lady, "was he very much vexed indeed?"

"No, and that was odd, he took it so easily that I thought he would never write any more. He did not scold, he only sighed once, and tapped his forehead and said, 'Thou canst not burn what is written.' However, soon he began, not only to write again, but to play. He played now on a fiddle, which he tried for a week; all night long he played; at the end of the week he got a horn, then a flute; all sorts of instruments. There might have been hope if he would have kept to one, but he never settled to any. And he was so idle, that he would only practise."

The lady smiled.

"But how did he contrive to play the organ, for that is wonderful in him, and even you must be proud of him there."

"No, lady, I do not understand music, nor can I hear much in it. I used to love our solemn, holy hymns at Rosenthal."

"What, then, is your religion?" asked the lady.

"I am a Moravian, and the Countess Von Welt brought me with her, when she married, as her maid, because I worked so well. I embroidered all her wedding dresses; and oh! to see my husband's shroud and winding-sheet—they were most beautiful, so fine, everybody came to see them."

A sudden thought struck the lady. "What was your name before your marriage?" she enquired.

"Rachael von David; my father lived at Rosenthal, and was a tailor. My mother was a Moravian, she too worked well."

"A *Moravian*," murmured Lady Delucy. "The old heritage, the old brand of merit, only half hidden under the parti-coloured rags of naturalisation."

"What did you say, madam?"

"Nothing, nothing; but your son, how did he get to the organ?"

"He asked his father for six lessons, only six. He learned of the organist at the Church. After one lesson he came home with a black bruise on his head; when his master began to play to him, he had actually pushed him off the stool; then naturally enough his master was in a passion, and hit his head with the corner of the big choral book. Herman would learn of him no more, nothing suited him but that he would learn of Herr Schenk at the Cathedral. That was so dear his father refused him first. But it was not dear in the end, for Herr Schenk took a fancy to him and gave him twenty-four lessons for nothing.

Then came the worst part of his ingratitude to God and man. For though I should have preferred him to be anything else, yet it would have been very respectable if he had got a place as organist—in a Church, I mean, of course. Herr Schenk promised to give him a letter, a certificate, and one besides to tell that he could teach. At first he got on so well that he had eight pupils, and he played duets sometimes with Herr Schenk, which made crowds come to the Cathedral to hear. At last, oh Lady, my old mistress, the Countess von Welt, sent for him, for my son to teach her daughter, the young Countess. How glad I was! I *was* proud then. Oh how I talked to him and besought him to behave well, and I made him most beautiful shirts, and brushed his clothes; he looked like a gentleman. For a month or two he went on well, except that he always crumpled his wristbands by tucking them half way up his arms,—the shirts were never fit to put on twice. But then he did a most dreadful and grievous thing, which spoiled all his fortune, and then troubles came together as close as swallows in a flight."

"What was the dreadful thing though?" asked the lady frowning, really impatient.

"He actually had the audacity to make love, at least not exactly to make love, but to show he felt it, to the Countess Clara, my old mistress's own child, his own pupil. The Countess sent him away, and would never see me, nor him, any more. All the people, who let him teach their children, took them from under his instruction too: he lost all,—and when the Countess von Welt sent him his money, he sent it all back to her. Then, all at once, his father died, he had been poorly, and I had not told him of Herman's misbehaviour, because I thought it would make him worse. I was glad I had not told him, he was spared that unhappiness. Then, after his death there was much less money in the business than I thought; he had always looked for his son to help him. And Herman made me sell the stock; it fetched little, for the people were all running to a new shop opposite the market, where a Frenchwoman sold shoes and boots from Paris.—Well, Herman said to me, 'this money will keep you for a year, and *then* you will see what I shall do. I am going away all day, every day, but I shall come back at night and sleep.' In case of robbers or fire, just to think, to leave me so! And he would not say where he was going: certainly he

came home every night, but he never said a word, and I of course thought he was working hard at some trade, to surprise me with. At the end of the year he told me—that is, he took me with him to Herr Schenk's, and, lady, that whole year he had been doing nothing but studying music. 'Why,' I said, speaking as mildly as I could, "how much more time do you mean to waste so?"

"'All my life,' said he. Then despair seemed to fill my heart, and I could say no more, I could only pray for resignation to bear my lot."

"And what next?"

"Herr Schenk said, very politely I must say,—he is a fine old gentleman,—'Your son is going to England and there he will make his fortune. 'Oh, what a long way,' I said; 'if we must go anywhere why not nearer home?' 'Because, said Herr Schenk, 'England is the richest country in all the world, and I shall write him a letter which he is to take to a kind and great lady, who will introduce him to her friends as she introduced me. She is richer now than she was then. All the great persons in England like their children to take lessons of foreigners, especially Germans, in music. And he can teach children —yes, and grown-up children now.'"

Lady Delucy thought of the simple old German who only loved his pipe besides his organ, and who led so frugal a life that he could subsist entirely, when in London, upon the handsome remuneration she, his then only pupil, made him for his instructions, when, before her marriage, she had wished to make herself mistress of the science of music. And she wondered how the being she had in the hall would contrive to instruct children, especially the children of the nobility of Britain.

She would ask no more questions about *him*.

"You tell me you work," she observed. "Now you need be under no apprehensions about your son and yourself, for I can get you and *give* you a great deal of work. Fine work is almost as difficult to procure as fine music. My daughter will be married some day, and as she will go to India with her husband she will want a great many more clothes than do most young ladies when they marry. You shall make them all—at least as many of them as you like—for I know how beautiful is the needlework of the Moravians, and that my daughter and I shall like yours very much better than what is done in England."

Then the lady finished in her thoughts:—"It

will take her mind off her son. His patience with her is actual virtue, but it would be heresy to call it so."

Soon she was alone with the son.

He was not so agreeable as she had expected—for, once out of the musical body, he was as queer and restless as ever, seeming scarcely in a condition of sanity. Indeed, had she been a fool, she might really have thought him mad; but she was of too lucid a mind not to receive clearly the impression of every other. She fixed her serene eyes on him, and gradually he calmed beneath their influence. However he writhed and fidgeted, his eyes became fixed upon *her*, and he now examined her with all the eagerness of a youth, yet all the simplicity of a child.

"She has told you about the little countess, lady?"

"I did not believe what *she* believes however, do not fear."

"No, I should think not. It was the countess who made love to *me*. It was I who would go no more to teach her, after she had pressed my hand and asked me for a lock of my hair. But she was so angry with me for scolding her and sneering at her, that she told her mother it was *I* who had

been the fool. I never knew love—the love of the human lover. My bride is found, however—nay, I have married her. And she shall not be poor. She shall reign a queen, and I her king, will reign over her, yet worship her and be her servant."

"Now, I wish to ask what are your *designs?* Without knowing them I cannot help you, and I wish to help you *rightly*. You know that, for you read character."

"You ought to wish; it would be for your own advantage, too," he muttered. Truly, no respect of persons dwelt with him, saving only one person —himself.

"I know, and fully recognise, the claims of genius. But there is an intellectual as well as a moral conscience. The greater the powers the more conscientiously they must be employed; the more they promise the more they must produce."

"Who, of nineteen years, ever knew what I know? I am aged with knowledge; wisdom turned my heart to stone in the cradle."

"Is this vanity or the pride of power?" the lady asked herself. "But what do you wish to do—how to begin?" she added, aloud.

"Lady"—and here his voice was no longer

rude, it trembled—"I did not come here to make money, though I came because it is so rich a place; and though it is strange enough that, practical nation as you are, with your golden tests for everything, even merit, you still are the people who give the most to fame, and the most fame to the famous. I want to make my first great fame in England, not as others have done, make it abroad and then bring it over, already hackneyed, to be hunted round and round in a circle, and then turned out altogether."

"But here—in this country-place?"

"Oh, Schenk gave me the letter addressed here, because he said it was the time of year when fine ladies are in the country. As for my mother, you may think it impertinent I brought her too. But I will never leave her, and I can earn enough to support her by spending an hour a day in writing trumpery for the music-sellers. I ought to support her, for I would learn no trade. You see what she is, that she believes in art as in the devil—in fact, not believing it at all, but frightened at it as the superstitious fear ghosts, not believing in *them* either. But she brought me up, instead of strangling me or starving me; ugly as a viper when I was born, she nourished me,

she let me live. And for that she shall be remembered when I am a Power upon the earth."

"Your wish then is fame, fame earthly and perishable, after all."

"Fame!—but many things have fame, earthly things, fame earthly; things spiritual, a fame as pure."

"May it be yours, and may you deserve it; above all, may you not depend upon it for your soul's sustenance, for if so, you shall thirst again."

"Ah, you once had fame, a woman's fame. And you could give it up! What surer proof that fame is no more sufficient for a woman's whole delight than love is enough for man's."

The lady smiled. When she had given up her dear pursuit it was for nothing she loved as well, nor had the love she received filled up the chasm in her being between her artist and her private life; it did but cover the abyss with frail bright roses, though an angel hovered over it—her child. Still, nothing in her face, or manner, or most transient mood, betrayed that to her life the vital principle of life's perfection was wanting. There was but a shade of gravity at which one wondered,

because she was so generous, and her means to relieve were so large—for to have the *power* to be generous equal to the will, is the most certain brightener, after love, of a true-hearted woman's fate.

CHAPTER VIII.

On a bright May morning the chief critic of one of the periodicals that sustain the glory of the English press, was sitting at his desk with nothing particular to do, because nothing particular had been done. Innumerable letters lay on the table directed to Tims Scrannel, Esq. He had answered all he meant to answer, and left the others out to produce an effect, even though his servant only should witness the effect, and have cause to marvel at the magnitude of his correspondence.

Tims Scrannel was no ordinary person. Sluggish and cold as crawled the current of his blood, surcharging his temperament with lymph, yet his veins held brighter, quicker drops, that seemed

as though with *that* they could not blend, any more than wine with oil when poured upon it. His parents' marriage of mislike had developed itself in the sure result, an offspring endowed with a crabbed contrariety of attributes. He was, as it were, possessed of twin spirits, fraternising not in their mutual prison,—as if to realise the old heathen suspicion that two demons dwell with the individual man, prompting him either to good or evil. A demon and an angel ruled this nature, and if not equally, it was not strange, for the demon was fostered upon its own food, the flesh, and the senses were its ministering slaves. But as for the angel, that slept in the trances of the soul, only waking at strange moments, a stranger almost to itself.

All circumstances had conspired to make this life a convulsion, rather than a struggle, for this twin-possessed. He was unloved by a loveless mother—one of those of whom one can but believe they are here, on earth, in a state not only probational but progressive:—a feminine monster, head-woman—that is, a brain teeming with frivolous inventions; heart-reptile, whose still, chill blood seemed the unbound snow-wreath of maiden modesty to the simple nature it deluded

—until round his warm heart the cold coils had closed—too late, for after marriage. Thenceforth *his* life became a galvanised existence; his soul swooned into a torpor which nothing but the shock of death could scatter. Tims Scrannel was their only child, begotten in disappointment, and born, as far as character involves personality, *of* a mother, yet without one. He was ugly, and his mother hated him, cast him from her cold breast; he was weakly, and his father cared for him tenderly, until his budding character disclosed the blight of the maternal blood. He had been christened—by his mother's determination, which always carried the day by woman's majority of one against him who, if not her master, is sure to be her slave—and named a name which no person could wish to bear to the grave, and have inscribed upon his coffin. But he was so insignificantly named that he might possibly inherit a property belonging to a relation of his mother's, whose house bore that name since Barebones sat. And he changed his sirname besides, that he might actually inherit the fortune of another. The first speculation failed entirely, and as for the second, it was, on reversion to him, so diminished by extravagance that it was scarcely worth

the trouble of a claim. At twenty-five Tims Scrannel was a disappointed man. He had never been a *youth*, in the young, ignorant, and dreamful sense, reeling as with wine beneath the bliss of being. Like Narcissus, he gazed on himself, and unlike Narcissus fell to hating the image he beheld within. He detested his looks, his name and style, his means—just sufficient to make the very poor envy him as rich, the rich to look down on him as very poor. His ambition was petty, therefore perilous, for if he longed to be something it was something he knew not of, and no winged impulse drove him to any goal. From head to foot cased in the icy mail of scepticism, there yet boiled a spring at his heart—the fire of jealousy ever fed that central heat. Yet was the brain sound, the mind without a flaw, and there were mines of intellectual resource ever in reserve, and golden veins enriched by working to the uttermost. And as for the soul, there in its own home the angel slept, and now and then woke gently—gently as Byron's *slept*, under the muse's magnetic sway. The waking of the angel gave a thrill of higher life—nay, the highest—to the imprisoned nature; it distilled through all the senses. To his ear, ever that of the musical

voluptuary, it brought the music of the spheres; to his eye it showed the green repose of death's illimitable fields, the true Elysian. In those angelical moods, his taste was turned as fever-sick from the luscious fruits of pleasure, and the taste spiritual that it typified yearned in the thirst of its extremity for such water as was promised to the woman frail and faithful at the earthly well. Then the very arms wearied of all that man can materially embrace, the sense of touch was sublimated into that spiritual body we call magnetic, when soul embraces soul; then the very scent fainted from perception of artificial essences, the green-room bouquet and the ball-room wreath; but a rose freshly opened, or a wall-flower washed in spring rains, suffused the soul with soft, sad memories, a trouble of delight.

But the twin-angel, far from making the possessed one suffer less, added poignancy to the contrasting torment; the demon-twin raged and tore him, in revenge for the transient helplessness in which it had been bound. And its fiendish strength, in alliance with the cold common sense of the mind in mammon's power, excellently fitted him for his profession, a jackal of that lion, the press. He, without unmanly flinching, could

pluck the literary weakling from the breast that nourished it, and mercifully strangle its earliest cries; he could cut the gangrene of vanity from the self-love he wounded, with a hand that quivered not the while it tortured. He could also have bound up the wounds which sensitive merit had received from a misappreciating majority; he could have directed conscious yet trembling power, and have taught the new-fledged muse the flight of the Olympian heaven. He helped none of these. He could approve, but it was always the prize effort of mediocrity; he could encourage, but ever the mind mimetic, he could urge to fresh essays—but it was then as though he urged the swan to the shore, and the dove to the water-waste where her foot should find no rest. He could condemn the nightingale to silence, and tempt the hedge-sparrow to sing.

But he was a treasure to his employers, those who call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet—and taste them wrong too, after long vitiation of the mental palate. It has been said that it is easier to unmake than to make, and this certainly holds good of criticism. A book may be demolished (as to its popular and peculiar character) in half an hour's light writing, yet itself may have been

laboured at for many months. Just as a picture may be despoiled of fame by being hung in a wrong light, so may a book be displaced from the niche its own pretensions might have gained for it, by a false design ascribed, not proved. But who looks for proof in such a case, in days when time is money?

But Tims had funded his mental resources so wisely that he lived well, in the social sense, by means of a style of writing no more difficult nor exhausting to a shrewd person of superior education and large literary experience, than it is difficult for a dispensing chemist to compound drugs. He lived also by himself; he was not married, though no longer young in years; he was too great an epicure to admire easily, and too suspicious to select, even among women, who pleased him. Then he was so plain a man, and only a beautiful woman of a high physical stamp and social caste would have repaid him for the trouble of marrying. Still, often as the demon rent him with its teeth, and lashed his sullen blood to blackest fever, his angel, the Art loving, saved him from the vortex of dissipation, seeming to hold above it her still impending presence, as the moon's white finger points out the sudden chasm at the traveller's feet.

Tims rose from the writing-table in his ornate room, so chastely furnished, with its small pyramid of minute marble busts—the celebrities of the modern Olympus, reduced by the skill of the first metropolitan modeller from master casts. Four pictures only adorned the walls, a Murillo, a Coreggio, a Titian, and a Turner. About a thousand books, all bound in green—all presents from their authors, and each with its flyleaf an autograph—filled two cases of carved mahogany, and the one large window faced a small fretted balustrade, sparkling with scarlet geraniums.

Tims walked upstairs into his dressing-room, a chamber so shaded and so scented that in it Adonis might have lain in state. He snarled in the ruthlessly-reflecting mirror at his own face, his brickdust-hued hair, and eyes placed like those of a Mongol,—at the entirely bare fact of ugliness attested by every line and wrinkle, the angel-gleam totally eclipsed now by the interposing demon. But upon his hands Tims did not scowl; he grimly grinned; they were his pet point, the jewels of his personality—white, delicate, well-shaped—worthy as models of his artistic worship, and the constant contemplation of them with which he was wont to relieve his mind in public, when surrounded by handsome men, fair women,

and beautiful-faced artists, whom he envied most of all.

Tims was dressed carefully, yet carelessly, in a sere-leaf coloured coat and a brown round-topped hat, like a wandering artist. He was going to see and be seen at the private view of the Academy in Trafalgar-square.

It was full when he got in—the chief room especially crowded, and as usual the great crowd was before one picture.

Tims, of course, had seen all the most important pictures at the artist's own houses, for they all tried, naturally enough, to conciliate him. Strange, however, to say, the crowd was in this instance neither before Moonraker's "Morning after the Last Day," nor in front of Leveler's "Dream of the Christ Child," nor wondering, divided between delight and distaste, at Romana's "Expiation, Post Mortem." It consisted certainly, for the most part, of men, and they were all worshipping together at a shrine which would never lack votaries, though all fanes should fall and temples perish,—woman's beauty. It was a full-length life-sized portrait, and when Tims caught a glimpse of the lovely girl-face he looked to his catalogue and read the name to that number, Lady Geraldine Albany.

Tims hated all beautiful women the moment they were married, but he liked to look at them, and at their pictures if well painted, could he not see themselves. There was everything in this portrait to entice his scrutiny, but he only growled at it afar off and turned away.

He had been rusticating for six months, and had not heard all the fresh fashionable news, for like many who are enforced to write for the public, he was too sick of such writing to read more than he was obliged. Thus, though he immediately recognised the countenance of Geraldine, he did not immediately connect her name, Albany, with the name of *the* Albany whose renown was one of the phenomena of the times and a popular proverb.

When Tims had been in Italy about ten years before, he had been courteously received by the Geraldis, to whom he carried a letter of introduction from a generous literary colleague, his superior in rank. He had access to the picture-gallery, the decorated chapel, and the palace-gardens. While wandering amidst the paths which were strewed with the fallen myrtle-flowers, he met the loveliest child he had ever seen, none the less lovely because it was a girl. Upon this child he cast a glance of admiration, met by one

of scorn, that piqued him more, so that he dared to address her; whereupon she uttered a wild musical scream and fled into the house. Finding she belonged to it, he thither followed her, and she was forced by her grandmother's stately presence to acknowledging his—that is, she curtseyed to him with her eyes turned from him. He seized her hand and would have kissed it, but she could bear no more, and tearing it from him she plunged it into a vase of water, then rubbed it violently upon the damask table-cover, shrieking, at the top of her voice, "Wicked, ugly, horrible man to touch my hand; the mark will never come out; it will never come clean again!"—and so was borne off by her nurses, pouring execrations upon him until too far off to be heard. He never forgot her dislike of him, nor her beauty either; and here it shone upon him from the canvas, only expanded and perfected as the full moon drooping with its glory, from the thin, pearly crescent. And, as he turned away from the art-reflex, there beamed upon him the original, the face he recollected, just so perfect now. And it whitened with the old child-scorn as Geraldine recognised him, and the child's dislike, none the slighter for the woman's added to it, quivered in an azure lightening from her proud blue eyes. And

to brim up the torment in full measure, the daughter of the Geraldi leaned on the arm of the Diamid Albany as only a wife could lean on one to whom her faith was wholly given and her love dedicated.

Yet another than Tims might have been too much touched by her looks this morning to recall any old anger except as a dream. The portrait had not been painted six months, yet Geraldine had altered since, strangely, pathetically, most spiritually changed, though she could not but have been known again. The soft brilliant colouring of her Anglo-Italian race, carnation on the lips, blush-bloom on the exquisitely fair cheeks, the blood that tinged the clear lilac of the veins with rose, were in the picture, but Geraldine's mortal face wore them no longer. She was pale to the edge of ghastliness, only too young to look so, as the dawn-flush softens the strong dazzle of the snow. Her forehead was ampler; a mournful shade from the excessive dilation of the pupils darkened the blue iris of her eyes. After her first glance at Tims, which was one of startled memory merely, she looked at him—knew him no more; she only clung the closer to her husband's side. He was talking: she drank down his words eagerly, as the thirst-

stricken in the desert the drops of the rain-shower; and now and then, when he uttered some choice remark, the phantom of a smile stood on her lips, the ghost of a blush on her cheek, and she seemed to tremble, as the rose might tremble with the vibration of the nightingale's song.

When Albany caught sight of Tims, who could not easily be mistaken for another any more than he himself could, they greeted. Diamid was cool in his salute, because he was entirely occupied with his wife, whose society he had little enjoyed since they had come to town; Tims was obsequious, because infuriate. To see he child who had hated him married to the man he hated! Tims had always hated Diamid Albany. Albany, notwithstanding, did not take the bread out of his mouth, he rather put bread into it, by giving him so much to write about. But he ever scorned to cater to the critics, though glad, as all sensitive writers must be, to be praised when he deserved it. And all Scrannel's criticisms, those with which too he took the greatest pains, which he impregnated with his sagacity the most generously, were *against* Albany, who had no reviewer who did him so much harm, because none other of so pregnant a mind and eloquent a style. Others

ridiculed what they understood not, darkened their counsel by words without knowledge, or servilely flattered the author's personality, because incapable to discriminate between his own merit and that of his books. But Scrannel had a brain all eyes, which could penetrate to every motive, and he knew the weakness of Albany to consist in his moral pride, as his strength lay in his intellectual generosity. When reprints appeared of his novels—those works so brilliant and profound, each illustrating some one select idea, and which had all been produced in a space wherein an author less creative and prodigal would but have completed one,—Scrannel reviewed them at large, having merely noticed them when first they astonished the world. He accused the writer of idleness with capacity, upbraided him with what he had done, and pronounced the mental powers exhausted, because they had been *concentrated.* His poems and dramas, which had been flung off carelessly as the peacock casts its plumage, were no longer produced, because the spring had dried up. And as for his political character—for it was the triplicity of his talents as author, orator, and genius of affairs, that chiefly excited men's envy, as it compelled their appreciation—because he had

changed his opinions, rather cast off from them the ripened husks, retaining the new kernel—because his judgment, through experience attaining a loftier attitude, viewed therefrom a wider sweep of probabilities—he was damned as shifting and slippery, with those who hunt for place. Unfortunately for him, his friends were less potent, far fewer also than his enemies, as it will ever be in the case of real merit, whether modest or self-asserting, in this day of party and of progress. And his enemies hated his success—not him, for him they knew not. He had a fault as well as a weakness however—lust for power, not as the vain man yearns, but as the proud spirit would bow the heavens to attain; and he cared not for his actual success, because, not continuous, he deemed it not complete. In fact, the very beauty of his character, and that wherein he differed from the fully successful, was that in these the heart must be *of* the world, and he was only *in* it. Wherein he despised himself, therein was his glory; what he would have grasped in the present even at the expense of his own future immortality, was precisely that the deprivation of which made him greater than the great Thing he would have liked to be. But, after a youth of unexampled renown, it was

natural for a heart still true to nature, amidst the artificialities of the necessary mental condition, to fancy its maturity a failure, because it contrasted with its youth as decidedly as the brooding midsummer, when the birds have left off singing, the trees wear their intricate calm shade, and the fruits drop dead-silently on the lush grass, differs from the spring with its million love-notes, its leafage greening hour by hour, its infinite progressive bloom.

As for Geraldine, she cared for none of these things; she lived in a world of her own, certainly, and one dangerously different from the world material under her feet and round her;—for he was its sun, its atmosphere, alas! its only heaven.

And on this day Geraldine and Diamid were alone together so far as their consciousness was concerned;—still another person was with them—rather, just behind her, watching him with suspicious, brilliant eyes, that flamed with jealousy. Her cousin, the poor and haughty boy, who had dragged out his dependent existence at her grandmother's house, had been the better off, if not the happier, for her marriage. She had sent for him to stay with her directly the second moon of marriage streaked the sky. Geraldine was

still a child in her indiscriminate generosity, as when in her 'baby-days she heaped her own dinner into a beggar's basket, and forced her ear-rings on a wandering lazar, and gave her first watch to one of the menial nuns at the neighbouring convent, to help her to be punctual alike in her bead-tellings and her floor-scrubbings. It would have been better for Geraldi not to have seen her again, but she sent for him because she thought it would make him happier, whether she knew it was good for him or not. So between his hatred for her husband and his love for her, the fierce Italian faith quickened in his brain to a delirium only differing from that of illness, because it was under his temporary control.

"They are rather different *now*," he muttered, as the three passed the picture.

"Of whom do you speak?" asked Albany, who heard the remark.

"Geraldine and the portrait. *She* is ten years older, twenty years sadder, and thirty years uglier."

"Thank you!" said Geraldine, smiling forcedly, "and not *one* year wiser, Geraldi?"

"*He* knows not," said Diamid, in his lowest tone. "Only I know yet."

"They will all know soon," whispered Geraldine.

Geraldi heard the whisper, and added, "That indeed they will," with still more disdainful irritation in his voice, darker anger in his eye.

As he followed her down stairs—for very soon she told her husband she did not admire any of the pictures, though she did not confess to her real fatigue—they passed another group, Lady Delucy and her daughter, with a strange-looking man, from whom at first they all shrank—then all turned to examine him. He faced this scrutiny with so vivid and mocking an eye, folding his arms, and standing still, that they all three felt ashamed, they knew not why; even Diamid felt baffled in his instinct of reading character at a glance.

"We are going up stairs; and you, I suppose, have been," said Lady Delucy, as they met; but it was evident she was glad to get her companion away, for she said to him in a tone of kind authority and interest, "We must go on directly, for we have not much light to lose."

"'Tis a German, then," said Diamid, as they moved on. "Who can he be? She has never told me of him—do you know, Geraldine?"

"No," said Geraldine, "I never saw him before; he does not look a proper person to be with her, so odd, so wild, and rude. I think it must be some madman who followed her in, and she does not know how to get rid of him, and is afraid of making him angry."

"It is one who follows her as I follow you," said Geraldi, "therefore, perhaps I am mad."

It was true that Geraldine had never seen him, though she had heard him behind the curtain in the hall. And, to Lady Delucy's surprise, though Geraldine had become excessively intimate with her, running in and out of the castle every day through the garden; yet *lately*, that is, the last three months of their country sojourn, she had not seen her at all. Nor had she seen her yet in town, for they had all only just come up. But in this moment of their meeting, she had observed the change in Geraldine's face. She was just going to observe it to Elisabeth, when Rodomant began to talk, and as usual, when he did so, she forgot what she had been going to say herself.

"After all," he said, jamming his hat down still more over his eyes, "it is not so very un-

usual in this country, for persons to seek what I seek, and which you tell me I pursue too earnestly. Those persons, who stopped to stare at me, I suppose saw in me what I saw in them; but the difference between us is, that *one* of us has gained it, and wearies of it; another will never gain it; and the third—well, the third will gain it and never weary."

"Yourself the third. You are right about *him*, the older man; he is very famous, but I think you're mistaken about the other, he looks as if he had some lower purpose or excitement than even the desire to excel."

"The desire to excel! that is not it; the desire that the whole world shall confess to the excellence! But I did not mean the boy, I meant the girl."

"I don't think she has any ambition; she is entirely devoted to her husband, perhaps jealously so."

"She is *half* devoted to him, that is heart-devoted, but the mind is devoted to something else, drawn up like a mist to the sun—it will descend to earth again in tears."

"Do let us move on again, or it will be quite too dark to see Romana's picture."

CHAPTER IX.

"Is this your picture-gallery?" he exclaimed loudly, as they entered the chief room. "Why, our print-shops are as big themselves; and as for the pictures, I see no paintings of anything except tall men and women."

"There are too many portraits; and this is rather a poor harvest. Romana has only one, Leveler only one, and Moonraker only one. The last two artists are abroad—the first has just returned to England."

"Let us see what is the difference. What is that picture with the map of the moon in it?"

"That is not a moon, it is the skeleton of the earth—Moonraker's Morning after the Last Day."

It was a singular picture: a black-blue sky, where pale comets streamed athwart cresset star-wreaths, sick lightnings blent with wild Aurora —chaos had returned to the material heavens. And the material earth,—whether in the poet's fancy bleached by fire-purification, or withered with the age of its last millenium—the material world looked like its own ghost, terrible in its stark white loneliness—as the lady had called it, an orbed skeleton.

"That is a bad, wicked picture," said Rodomant, not heeding who heard him. "Wandering away to eternal oblivion—what does he mean by that? Confusion returned again, worse than the first, because without hope. No Time coming, with primal love and bloom of passion. No balance of bliss, the restitution, the new earth and heaven; if he could not paint *those*, it was irreligious to paint *this*."

"This at least is not irreligious; the Dream of the Christ-child."

"A child like any other child, and not a pretty one either; on the contrary, a child with an old face, like mine. His head on a lamb, and a wreath of holly round his head—did holly

grow in Palestine? or snow-drops near Jerusalem? for he is crushing snow-drops in his hand. A Hebrew child, of princely race, with the features of a swaddled German. Nor is the dream depicted as a foreshadow, it is a literal portrait, a study of an agony, an effigy of Nature in extremity, the doom distinct as the scarlet thorn-wounds. And the lesson it teaches—what is that to you, whose Protestant law forbids you to worship likenesses and images? The Catholic worships the symbol of what is reality to his faith. But how often soever men have painted similitudes of Man-God, *this* man cannot paint God as man. The artist is an artificer, the design beyond the workman's hand."

"See, now, Romana's 'Expiation.' You know what it means? A criminal after execution given up to the medical authorities to be cut into pieces for the benefit of mortal successors. A horrible subject; I wonder he chose it, with his refinement. It is a refinement of horror, certainly, but it is well painted, and there is in the idea of a criminal's further degradation after a degraded death, being expiatory, some kind of rude pathos."

"There is much more," cried Rodomant, halting before this picture, which literally blazed with finish; "there is profound tragedy in the conception, and the painting is superb. In all our galleries there is nothing half so grandly drawn and coloured. The marble of the table is marble, the gas above is gas, and what it lights is dead flesh and living flesh—the two humanities. Which is the sadder and the most of earth? Not even the half-sheeted, livid body, helpless now to conceive or commit evil, with the calm that death refuses not to one, even the most evil, creeping back over the dead face, and stealing from it the last convulsion that is life's, not death's. The damp still hanging to the hair, you could catch it on your finger; those tears of terror, do they not seem repentant? The purple ropemark, is it not a brand? Does not the branded go free afterwards? Yes, less sad, less earthly is the dead flesh than the living men. See their triumph. How they gloat over their treasure! How they long like cannibals for the division of the same spoil? To them the dead is no more sacred than the carcass of a dog, but as much more valuable as the drug we call gold, is more precious than the mud we scrape from our shoes.

This painter is a satirist and also a master. He is a master because he is imitated. See all over the walls, blots and patches in frames, where men have tried to paint like him and failed. Like all founders of faiths, himself sincere and wise, his followers are fanatics. He should have founded no new faith, he should have followed the old one to which Nature gives laws, as God gives laws to Nature. Then should he by this time have reached heaven, the artist's heaven—Ideal."

"This artist professes to paint what is as it is, not as it is seen, for he says no two men's eyes are alike nor see the same."

"The high artist should aspire to paint what is not seen as it is, too. He chooses subjects so human and so sad, because sadness and humanity are everywhere. Do we not know them, see them, feel them? He excludes himself from the heaven of art; he is an infidel—he does not really believe in what he cannot see. Dwells beauty on the face of the beloved? How often not; yet always the lover by faith perceives it. He, this stern art-realist, paints dead flesh and living flesh; marble, and wood, and metal; hard earthly things, and cruel, curious men. He dares not paint a sea-maid, for he has not seen the

sapphire ooze from which crystallised her blue diamond scales. He dares not paint an angel, for angels are not clothed in threads of cambric, nor have they their plumes furnished with down from the cygnet's breast. See, too, lady, how he chooses to paint red hair on all heads alike. We call red hair a defect. Well, some defects are beauties, like the opal-rainbow, or the blemish pearl. See how he glories in red hair! Let him call the halt, blind, and lame to a feast of Art."

It happened that Romana—called actually Rufus Romana by the art-opposition—was just behind Rodomant while now he spoke. This being, Romana, fine-featured and sentient, was excessively proud, so proud, indeed, that the slight taint of vanity in his veins was imperceptible in the excess and rush of the first imperial quality. And his pride had kept him in the other rooms while kind friends and kinder enemies were reporting to him, with all sorts of exaggerations, that a foreign artist was expatiating on his picture in German. But when some one told him that the German said he could not paint an angel if he would, his vanity goaded him into the immediate vicinity of the crowd round Rodomant, which crowd, curious for a fresh

excitement, gave way before him, and so forced him to go as near as possible to the speaker, lest the listeners should think him a coward, or incapable of self-defence.

"Are you a painter?" began Romana, boldly.

"I never said so," the other answered, turning round. "But all arts serve Art. As kings crown before men; like brother monarchs artists should uncrown in presence of each other. *You* painted that picture."

"How do you know that I did?"

"By the fire that feeds your eye as you look at it—a parent's pride; and by the sorrow whose swelling tears the fire perpetually quenches—a parent's sorrow, that recognises in the child its own transmitted imperfection."

"I never paint, that is, I never exhibit, a work which is not perfect," said Romana, haughtily.

"But the perfect is an abstraction, except as it is developed in kind, even in degree. A pebble is perfect; so is a worm, a moth, a flower, a rainbow, a star, the sun. This is a very low, perhaps the lowest possible revelation in development, of the perfect. When we are hungry you give us a stone for bread. And did you give us bread, we should yearn for manna. Others can give us

bread—*any* can give us stones on which to break our teeth. But you! Were you born to aspire as well as to create, what nectar and ambrosia could you feed our souls withal?"

"Perhaps I *am* aspirant rather than creative. It is unfair to judge me by one work, and *that* painted—well, in this place it would not be well-bred to say for what reason. Will you come to my house and see my pictures there; there are many, and I have more studies. And," lowering his voice, "I think I can show you an angel that I have painted even."

Romana took out his card. Rodomant took it, showed it to Lady Delucy, as though a child should consult its mother, and asked,

"Shall I go? Is it worth while?"

Now Romana would not have borne that rude speech bravely, but for the fact that he was very glad to see the lady was connected with his random critic. For Lady Delucy had never been able to endure his pictures; and as he was getting on admirably in the world, and selling them before they were painted, she had never asked him to her house; he needed not that patronage—which for want of a word more worthy we are driven to call the sympathy of art-lovers with

those who serve art for bread. He would have liked to know this lady, who was the fashion, as now and then unworldly persons are. She did not look at him, however, but only said to her companion—

"You know best, and must do as you please; I never advise you."

Had she advised him, most probably he would not have gone; as she did not, he went.

He lived in lodgings in town, just as he had done in the country, and found it easy enough to live, according to the frugal habits of his first retirement. Exquisite ballads, illustrations of social ephemera, that would have done honour to a laureate, and compositions for the pianoforte, in which the million failed to detect his actual contempt for that instrument, though any master must have been amazed at their audacious caricature of the mania for bravura—these he poured forth in profusion, and with equal facility disposed of them, but always with the stipulation that they should be published in another name than his—nor indeed was his name known yet as one to *be* known, nor breathed in any corner.

It was his custom, however, to treat his patroness with grateful attention still, shown, however, in

his own manner. Did she send for him he never went; was always engaged and sent word so without writing; yet it was by no means disagreeable to him to see her, for he continued to do so every other day at least,—knocking at the door now singly, now with fantastic imitation of the longest and loudest coachman's thunder; and always directly it was opened running straight upstairs into the lady's boudoir, which was only indeed a little shrine musical, filled with tempting relics of the saint, and the shapes harmonious that suggest and supply her forms of worship. If the lady was not there, he would touch the keys and throw forth an invocation of etherial sounds, or sing—for he would sing, though he had no singer's voice—in wild and shrieking accents, whose eloquence was of passion only. She seldom resisted that appeal, but if she did, from preoccupation or necessity, he generally revenged himself by going away, but putting the piano out of tune first. And as no person could put it in tune again except him only, after *he* had put it out, she was obliged to wait till he chose to come and do so. If, however, she was in the room, he all the same opened the door (knocking first, but never waiting for her to say "Come in,") and

marched to the piano, only nodding to her as he passed before he began to play. And, whether he despised that instrument or not, he certainly produced from it his ideas for her especial benefit.

The night after he had gone with Romana, he came as usual, but not as usual—went and stood in the middle of the room, instead of sitting down to play. "I like him," he began, "but not his pictures—they are all alike."

"Romana's? I have not seen them; but I should think they were. I mean, I have not seen those he has at home."

"They are all sold—he sells them ten deep. There is the golden calf—a real golden calf; there is the fiery serpent—a real fiery serpent—fiery-eyed, and venom-spitting; there is Portia, and the leaden box is a leaden box—the portrait in it is a real portrait—of course she has red hair; there is a real Cinderella—she is ugly as a real cinder-grub—she has red hair, too; there is a lady called Geraldine in a wood—the bark of the trees real bark—the leaves have veins and edges as if cut with scissors; the lady has naked feet—real naked feet, on real grass, of which you count the blades and the beads of dew. Her

jewels are real jewels—they are cut, and they sparkle. Her hair, of course, red, but there is rather more than the usual quantity of blue mould which he puts for mist, because it is moonlight. The only thing in that picture that is not real, is the moonlight. Well, I stood and looked—I did not say anything. Presently, he uncovered a portrait. 'There is the angel of the sun,' he said. It was simply a picture of a very fair woman, with brighter red hair than the rest.

"'Why,' I said, 'that is a woman. If your angels are women, no wonder you are so long in getting to the sun—you must have been born in a mine.' Then the door opened, and the little sun-angel appeared. She is a great deal prettier than the picture, and was very polite. He is very fond of money. He said, 'You may make but *one* success if you are poor; but when you grow rich, you may be famous as often as you please, and as unworthily.' I said I heard it was in this country so. 'In every country,' he said. 'Till Cagliostro was rich he was called a charlatan, afterwards he was a true magician; before Turner grew rich he was cold-shouldered, people squinted behind them at his pictures—afterwards

he might paint what he pleased, as badly as possible or as well, it was all the same to the world."

"Then he tried to find out who I was—I believe he thought I was rich, because my coat was gone shabby."

"You did not tell him?"

"No, nor how nor where I live. Not because I agree with him about money; but that the purple raiment I am weaving for myself to wear for ever, may never be contemptuously contrasted with the rags I spin from the refuse of my brain, to cover myself with *now*. Besides, we don't tell when we sell our old clothes to the Jews. Some fine ladies sell their dresses and trinkets—do you ever, lady?"

"No, she said, laughing, "who told you that slander?"

"My mother, who likes fine clothes herself, and therefore mortifies her flesh by wearing sad colours. The woman of the house told her. I lock my door that they may not pester me about baked meats and porter. They sit in the kitchen, listen to the mice scratching—'gnawing coffin nails,' they call it—and eat toasted cheese."

"But you did not tell me how you parted

from your new acquaintance—do you mean to see him again?"

"No, not if I can help it, in this world, and I don't think we shall be near each other in heaven. If I do ever see him again, it will be in the days of my kingship, and he will bend to me, and I shall hold out the sceptre, and he will touch it. And what he asks I shall bestow."

"You riddle," cried the lady, laughing, "and as it is not often you take the trouble to talk to me, and to-morrow I dare say will be speechless again, pray explain what you mean to-night."

"Well, I told him. 'Some day you will become a scene-painter, which is exactly what you are fit for.' He was in such a passion, that he got up and ran about, would, I believe, have rung the bell, and ordered my carriage, as I am told the fine people do here, even if you go to their houses in a wheelbarrow. But I saved him the trouble, for I got up and went directly."

"Quarrelling again! you quarrel with everyone—and if you do, what will become of you in this place?"

"You will see. Do I ever quarrel with *you*, lady?"

"What did you mean?" asked Geraldine, of her cousin, that evening when they were alone, "by saying that they would all know soon. What will they know?"

"That you are miserable," said Geraldi—"miserable with him, and through him. You are pale with the death of hope—despair. An icicle wastes not in the sun more rapidly than you do. You are strangling your wretchedness, but it is stronger than you, and its cold embrace will stop your heart at last."

"Geraldi!" she answered, as soon as she could speak for the wild trembling which seized her while he spoke, "you are cruel—cruel, and untrue. If I am pale, it is because I am sick with happiness. Brides are always pale, even in Italy, my Geraldi—pale as the myrtle-blossoms, even when their lips are red—red as the coral myrtle-buds. Are my lips not red, Geraldi?"

Those lips, with their burning bloom—had hectic really dropped on them the first spark of its fire inextinguishable, which goes not out till the time, be it long or short, that it has consumed the last ashes of the sacrifice to life eternal, of the mortal life?

"Red? yes, red as the fatal anemone—red as

the unripe grape when the sun shines through the clusters." Geraldi leaped forward, held her in his arms, pressed his lips to hers, scarcely cooler than they, strained her to his heart, till the blood driven suffocatingly upwards, filled her brows with throbbing anguish. Yet she felt nothing in his embrace but its affection; the passion so much less pure, the love so much weaker than hers for Diamid, became indistinguishable from them as flame in flame. And her pity filled her with affection too.

"Oh, Geraldine, why are you so sad? You never laugh—you scarcely ever smile."

"Fie, Geraldi—in Italy it is not polite to laugh; we never did."

"They laugh enough in England—this cold hell whose devils are white, not black—to the whitest of which you have sold yourself."

"Geraldi!" She drew herself from him, but only that she might cover her face with her hands, and weep into them.

"You do not know him? I can forgive you. But he is so dear to me, that I cannot bear hard words about him—above all from you, Geraldi—you must not speak so. You must be wicked if you think it—but you do not—no one could. He is pure as heaven, and I adore him."

"Oh, Geraldine! and you would not adore the Mother of heaven—you said it was taking too much from God. A love so blasphemous can be for nothing pure."

She wept still; silver tears rolled down on her dress, between her fingers now so pale and thin; either the founts of grief or gratitude were broken up, for not once she sobbed, she cried too tenderly.

"You must be miserable, oh, my cousin! for you weep while he is away: when he comes you never weep. It must be pride that dries your eyes when he is near. It must be pride that makes you hide your grief from poor Geraldi, because you knew how I loved you, and that had I not been *poor* Geraldi, I would have married you."

"Never! never! never!—though I know not why. And how do you know I never cry before him? I never cry before *you* when he is near—it is rather *so!*"

"Oh! cruel, cruel! And false—just as it is false to say I should not have married you—for I *would.*"

"Oh, Geraldi! how little you know of love, if you have never wept for gladness."

"But why do you sit alone so much, and hours

and hours together lock your door? I have come there, and I know it. I have tried to turn the handle, for I thought you were in a swoon, and you never heard me. You don't go out with him every time when you might, to hear him, to be seen with him. And when he is out, and cannot want you, you stay away from poor Geraldi, though you know I live on seeing you, and even endure *his* presence, for the sake of staying with you."

"Geraldi—he is very kind to you, very generous and gentle. He speaks of you as my brother, and a treasure of mine. He would show you how to get rich, if you would only learn. You are unkind to him and to me not to try to love him."

Suddenly she dried her eyes—looked up, a purple light streamed from under their golden lashes; the shape of her lips dissolved into the softer one of a smile. She opened those smiling lips—low, half-pronounced words quivered between them, but could not at first escape; again she closed them, again they parted. Geraldi's eager glance seemed to scare her purpose, for she left his side, and wandered to the window, with an uncertain step like that of

the night-walker in his sleep. And as persons in her bodily condition always do the most imprudent things, she opened the window, though it was raining, and the rain swept full in that way, driven by a wild spring gale. As the drops touched her forehead, and sprinkled her closed eyelids, her strength returned. But she remained with her back to Geraldi.

"I will tell you why I have sat alone, and still shall sit alone for some time. Diamid said I had better tell no stranger, nor even a friend. But you are no stranger, and you are more than friend—besides you know no one here. I have been writing a book Geraldi. It is not finished. But Diamid says—no, I cannot tell you what he says, you must guess, it is too favourable for me. He is so proud, I am so proud of his pride, and so weary of the delight it has given me, and of waiting to see what the world will say. He says my fame would crown his life, would fulfil his whole desire. I wondered he so wished it, until he told me what the people say about his marrying me, because of papa's connection, and the two fortunes I am to have. Say, Geraldi, are not you glad too?"

"I never saw or thought there was much good

in writing books, Geraldine. Of course it is a novel—all women in England write novels."

"These are the best and the worst works written in that class, Diamid says. Perhaps mine might be—"

"The best: I dare say it would. I know how splendidly you used to talk in our games, and that I could never find words to answer you. But at the big library now, from which you have your books, why they sell them about three months after they come out for about a tenth part of the first price. The man left a paper here, to say so, and there was a printed list. And among the names were many of the most celebrated, which I have even seen at our grandmother's. Then look at the library *there*, who ever opens all those books, or remembers the men who wrote them? Had you married me, your name would have been greater than the names of those who write books, for the deeds of the old Geraldi, and the new Feriani, are remembered through all Italy."

"But the past are not myself. Oh! to be *known*, were it only for one splendid hour, to make the world wonder at me, the crowds turn pale when they read my words, to make those

who cannot understand me tremble, and those who can, shiver too with excess of sympathy! To have it said that young as I am, I have genius and its sorrows for my doom. I could even bear to die."

"And it is poison too, slow or quick, according to your strength or weakness. Then besides, it is not wholly to please him."

"It was at first. When I used to talk to him, dream aloud to him about all things seen and unseen," he said—

"'Geraldine, that is all too good for me alone, the world should hear it. But you are an idle southern child, and have no design nor persistence, you could not write if you would, and are far too proud and modest to talk to the vulgar English as you talk to me.'"

"That is true, I cannot talk before the people in society, they make me ashamed, not because they are above, but because they are so infinitely below me. And I know all the fashionable people think me stupid. I have seen them stare at my silence and my refusals to dance. They think me afraid of them—me! Why, it is well they know not for them my contempt and scorn. But when Diamid said I could not write, I fired, my

blood danced, and my brain grew giddy with the rushing past of a thousand pictures. Next time I was alone I took a pen, I wrote; then it was all calm, not the unbroken calm of the noonday, but like the nightfall, still blue, still calm, but filled with stars, my ideas as countless and as bright."

"At least, Geraldine, show me what is written."

"But you cannot read English, easily."

"I should in any language be able to read and understand what you wrote."

CHAPTER X.

"HAVE *you* an invitation for to-night?" asked Tims Scrannel, visiting Romana in his studio one July morning, a disturbance the latter took care eagerly to receive as an honour, for fear of making the former angry, and drawing down on his own head the stored thunderbolt of critical revenge.

"I have an invitation to the affair at Bayswater, but as I passed the back of the house early this morning, I heard the workman's hammers going as hard as ever—surely it will not be ready."

"Well, as far as that goes, such a trumpery structure would not take long to run up. They were probably working at the decorations.

However, I dare say, whatever we see, we shall hear little enough, for what does she know of acoustics?"

"He must know by intuition every doctrine and decree of the science of sound, for such an attempt to be made feasible at all. *She* would never be made ridiculous, nor let another."

"But what experience has she? None of the foreign stage, and what does she know of music—nothing, except how to sing what is put before her. It is a tolerably big bubble for a woman to have blown, and will make all the more noise in breaking, because a woman blew it."

"I don't see how it can be *her* bubble, it is merely his. He is rich, and she only gives him her support and patronage."

"And you believe that? I believe nothing of the kind. The speculation and the risk are hers —the other report is only a blind. No man rich enough to put a work on the stage in Germany, and in his senses, would bring it to England first."

"Well, I suppose we shall know soon—but I was surprised to find you did not know already—that you were at none of the rehearsals."

"I have been away, busy at Paris about

Halévy's last, and had I been here, I should have refused if she had sent for me."

"I understand that the artists of the band, and the actors, are all agog about it, and Morrison, the manager of the Regent, is very angry at their excitement. Says she had no right to make them offers which entice them from their proper engagements with him, which is absurd, for at the very end of the season, when he has filled his pockets as full as he will fill them, it is unreasonable to expect they should not be eager to make as much as they can, honestly."

"Well, I only hope we shall not be suffocated, for half the world is invited, and there is little enough guarantee for security in a canvas and pasteboard booth, as it will be. However, no one but myself will give her an article, and if we are crushed I die at my post. Die you at yours —take my advice and stick to your easel, you will be better off at home."

"Oh, I shall go, I am curious. I like one who will dare everything for a great chance, if it is but to fail."

Lady Delucy, generous woman as she was, had never so generously risked herself, her own reputation for sense and judgment, and her means,

before. She felt the whole responsibility of the position she had taken, and was willing to abide by the consequences as only a generous person, entirely independent of popular opinion ever is. Still, so strong were her fears, that her hopes must have been stronger yet, for they predominated in her breast. Never in her girlish or married days, so strong an excitement filled her; for the first time she felt the utmost of which she was capable.

From the moment she had brought her *protégé* to town, he had worked, she knew not how hard, nor at what, until he chose to reveal. She had even fretted herself for fear he might be wasting his energies on the slight, unenduring compositions which he produced for self-subsistence—she was afraid, after all, that in his great words had evaporated the shadow of his grand designs. Because he talked so well, and played with ease that gave an air of trifling with art to his usual manner, she feared he might perhaps do little else—deceive himself unconsciously, and her through himself. Still, these doubts and suspicions only hung round her impression of him when she saw him not; the instant he appeared, his countenance with its severe lines, its aspect of

power, and the eyes keen enough to scrutinize even himself, as they seemed; these unerring signs restored her confidence, and the admiration which he exacted almost, scarcely could be said to excite.

May, creative, teeming May, had done scarcely less amidst the fields and gardens, than this young aspirant in the Paradise of Art. It seems in the invention and execution of some great works, as though one day were as a thousand years; moments are multiplied, hours lengthened, days stretch into the night—there is rather no night then. Only its first triumph can young genius so secure, only the wooing of the yet unwedded fame so speeds—devotion without weariness, excitement without exhaustion, passion, without pain. After that, through no night does the moon shine with the sun's ripening strength, the light of no day is as the light of seven: the unwedded has become the bride—the wife; experience has annihilated anticipation, care mingles with solicitude, the sublime suspense of the greatest hope of life, is lost in that hope's fulfilment.

It was true that this strange being, who was as poor in worldly means as any who ever dared self-advancement, had in point of fact, borrowed from

the lady who had befriended him, to such an extent that only extreme sagacity, or its meeting extreme of madness, could have empowered him to hope he could ever disburthen himself of his obligation. But it was the confidence with which he had accepted her magnificent favours, that gave confidence to her discriminating mind. She could not believe that so proud, so little vain a person, would over-rate his own merits, so great as she even felt and acknowledged them, nor utter false prophecies as to his own reception by the world. Still she knew the difference between worldly success, the proofs of which are the most substantial that exist, and the success among the *few* which is at best but a phantom of rumour, sneered at by the mob as phantoms are in which they nevertheless believe, and as intangible and melancholy a companion as another phantom, to the person haunted by it.

Had the majority of Lady Delucy's acquaintance been privy to the conversation in which she engaged to go greater lengths than ever patronage before extended, they would have given her crowning credit for the eccentricity, which was the favourite charge against her—they could not in fact have made another, if they would.

Certainly, she did things rarely done in her rank, yet so simply, one could not say she did them in defiance of it; as when she went alone, regularly, and as a matter of course not of duty, into dark places of the earth, where a clergyman would not have allowed his wife to go—nor taken her. Then she sat up with her own servants if they were sick and in danger; she neither left them to the servants of servants, nor sent them to the hospital. There was none most deeply disgraced of her own sex she did not humbly endeavour to reclaim; nor any she despised among the children of humanity, saving only those who proudly execrate the lawless and openly offending, quite unmindful of secret faults within themselves, too deeply, perhaps too darkly hidden for man to perceive or suspect. However, her friends and acquaintances consoled themselves for their consciousness that she was superior to all the selfish considerations which swayed *them*, by the fact of her being not actually one of themselves. It was proper for her to perform duties which were not theirs; what she had once been excluded her from the circle unexceptionable, which forms its *cordon* round the patrician's centre, whatever in these days that may be.

Just as the pedigree of the Arab race-horse is injured irreparably if he so much as stands upright in a tilled field, so her former profession distained her present rank, was neither to be forgiven nor forgotten.

One day Rodomant had run up to her room as usual, but not, as usual, empty-handed. He held in his arms a great bundle of music, closely written.

"It is done!" he exclaimed ardently, "done, but all is dark. There wants the command, 'Let there be light,' and now I find I am man, and no god, for I cannot pronounce the words"

"Can I?" asked Lady Delucy, who, aware of his passion for orchestral composition, had engaged to produce, at her own expense, in her own house, any work of reasonable length for instruments alone, whether symphony or chamber overture.

"It is too great; you will be afraid. See all this"—turning page after page of score instrumental first, then recitative-voice.

"Why," said Lady Delucy, astonished even more than afraid, for the supernal energy of this young mind had produced all this in one short month, "why it is an opera!"

"Did you think I would condescend to any-

thing else at *first*. Would I be known as able only to do a part when the whole is in my power? If you were not a woman I would play it to you, while you followed it, but women cannot read score though they pretend they can. You would not make out—translate—fast enough. Take then the libretto and read that. Slowly, for there are ideas there besides mine; shadows rather, to which I have given souls, wandering souls, which I have made to live and die."

She took the little black book from his hand and started.

"Count Alarcos! Why what made you choose that? Did you read the tale abroad?"

"No, no. In whose hand does the divining-rod bend and point, except in the hand of him who is born with the gold-affinity? My divining rod led me. I found the book here—an English one. I thought half-an-hour after reading it, and then it all came. Since then I only had to write what was made ready."

"It is a sublime and awful subject, and the most perfect tragedy I know. *This* dramatic rendering is besides superb, for I see how literally the English text is followed in the translation. Wise, too, to have it Italian, not German."

"It was too slow, yet simple, for my many-coloured tongue. It ought to have been in Spanish, only nobody would listen. And Italian is best for a rendering from Spanish."

"A finer subject for musical illustration could not be found. I always wondered that it did not wake up the world when published as a drama."

"Because it should be an opera; as I said it moves too slowly without music; it cannot be developed without action, because it is so simple. It seemed waiting for the music, I thought, as I read it."

"I am only afraid lest the subject, or rather the moral, will be, that is, would be—"

"Would be what?—a woman to want words!"

"Untraceable by these English, they love to be convinced even in a play. The retribution is in perfect harmony with the laws of justice, yet earthly justice is not heavenly, and I fear its transcendentalism might displease."

"No fear of that, because it is a tragedy, and the retribution is not only sad but horrible. Any murder interests; dramatically invested, it excites, because then people feel it is not shocking of them to feel an interest. But murder, and the vengeance, not of man, but God, you cannot call

transcendental; it is only spiritual. That was why it required embodying to be appreciated. Yet how, after all? Before there *was* light how could light shine? Can silence speak?" and he sighed deeply—groaned almost—then exclaimed, "Was there not a rich man, one Lord of Chandos, who gave *our* Handel a thousand pounds for his passionate pastoral of "Acis and Galatea?"

"I believe so," said the lady. "But Handel was Handel."

"And Rodomant is Rodomant. Still, he was my equal. That was a man to whom I would have taken off my hat. I know none now, and only one woman, besides my mother."

Here he made a gesture towards the lady, as though he uncovered his head. The hard arrogance of his last words, uttered in the sanest and most tranquil tones, redoubled that earnest wonder in her breast respecting his *real* character. Could he be what he conceived himself, or was it a fictive claim he purposely preferred, which, if disproved must ruin him and make her actually ridiculous?

"Women believe nothing, except what they should doubt. That is why men make them wretched, break their hearts, and so on; they

believe whom they should doubt, and doubt what they should believe. My mother, who is always preaching, says no one can get into heaven without faith. The Mohammedans were right then to keep women out of Paradise. Your Chandos lord believed in Handel; that was the reason he grew to be greater than a Chandos even in this England, though you do say people only care for money here. I do not believe that, but I suspect that they will have the worth of their money here, when they have paid it. Quite right, too; they should have it if they paid me. Did Handel ask Chandos for a thousand pounds?"

All this time the lady had been thinking deeply and anxiously. How thankful would she have been for some one wiser than herself to direct her. She at last said so.

"There is one here wiser," was his reply.

"It would cost much more than a thousand pounds to produce an opera like that. There is not a manager in London who would dare it, even if they were not all full for the season, the lists made out, and engagements signed"

"I would not let them have it; they would spoil it. I must have it all my own way; and then, once heard, once known, they would fight

for it, and spare no 'thousand pounds' on it. It would make them rich. And if *you* introduced it, lady, you would stand in history a famous woman."

Still she meditated, hesitated; she covered her eyes with the little black book containing the words of the libretto.

"You know," said he impetuously, half indignantly, turning to the piano, "how I despise this toy of wood, wire, and ivory. Yet listen only to its lispings of the great strain of the overture."

Those lispings were distinct enough; they praised their parent. And the calm, strong, fiery temperament, rushing into the touch, interpreted that praise.

At the end he turned, a light covered his countenance, not of triumph, but the stiller radiance of self-respect. She saw it not, she had sunk into a seat half swooning with the sudden pleasure, a passion which can only be felt by the musical; sweeter, how sweeter far than that of love, how far more deeply satisfied! The book with which she had hidden her eyes was wet with tears.

"Is it not beautiful, exquisitely beautiful?"

he cried, in transport. But she only murmured, "Go on."

"No," cried he, "you have heard enough. To believe is to will, they say. If you believe not now you never will believe, and never *will*. How can I go on? Have I four voices, a chorus, a hundred hands? the greatest of sopranos, the greatest of contraltos, a master bass, and a master tenor, a chorus without a will of its own, a band, every individual of which, having a will of his own, will bend to mine."

"And space; for there is none sufficient *yet* in my house here. And scenery and dresses—and such scenery, such dresses! And above all, how shall we find time?"

"I can create time. They say time is money; I would mine were."

"If you can create time then, the means are yours."

But though Lady Delucy brought herself to this decision she suffered sorely—not from the consciousness that in case of a failure she should have to exercise the strictest personal economy for years, for she neither drew upon her purse devoted to general alms, regularly emptied and refilled each year, nor upon the fortune she had

amassed on the stage, which she devoted to her needy brothers and sisters in art. It was upon the capital whose interest supplied her own annual income that she drew, and so largely that she did not choose to tell her daughter how much of personal luxury she risked. For, she thought, when Elisabeth goes to India she will never know on how little I live in England, or abroad where no one will know me. But, little as she revealed to Elisabeth, that young lady was frightened quite as much at the chance of her mother's being held in permanent contempt by the world by a "mistake," which the world never forgives—as at the chance of losing some thousand pounds, which seemed as great a one. However, Elisabeth consoled herself at last by reflecting, "Mamma can go with me to India, then no one will guess anything here; or if she does not choose she shall live at Northeden, and we will send our children over to her to be educated."

Lady Delucy not only deceived her daughter as to the extent of her speculation, but she made it appear to the world as though she shared it equally with the artist, and most persons to whom it mattered little, believed her. Not so

Tims Scrannel, who, like some bad, shrewd natures, understood good unworldly natures better than such understood each other. He suspected her of the entire risk, and hence his remark to Romana. Now Lady Delucy would have thought it quite worth her while, and would have done her utmost to conciliate Tims Scrannel, whom she duly appreciated as the only art-critic in England. She desired to buy him over, dearly bought as he ever was; not, however, by bribe of gold, but by appealing to that enthusiasm which none who read his matchless criticisms could fail to recognize and respect, how embittered soever was their sympathy by the cold and cruel cynicism which gave his brightest words so sharp an edge. But Lady Delucy was not permitted to "buy him over" by the heaven-sweet beguilements, sweeter than earth's sirens, which her own soul confessed in the music of the new and strong aspirant. For she wished to invite him to the rehearsals, to make the single exception to their privacy in his favour. But Rodomant said "No, for in that case he would write his remarks ages before the proper time, the revelation; be cool enough to study his expressions, put lies among them, and the world would believe the review to be written

in the heat of enthusiasm; under my influence when *complete*. Till it is complete, neither he nor any, save you to whom it belongs of right, shall be able to chatter about it or bear witness to it—false witness as it then would be."

The time was ripe, the night fell. Lady Delucy had arranged for three special performances, to which she had invited her audience free. If they failed there could be none other, for who would pay to hear if he would not come to hear without paying? Her invitation list included every critic of any note, every artist and publisher of any mark, all the managers, all the amateurs, and a great many fashionable persons. Also some of that class with which the pit and galleries are filled. It was at the last moment she trembled, lest her audience should fail her, lest some great and sudden spite should take hold of her mob—one of those epidemic antipathies which sometimes infect a crowd. Nothing of the kind; they were all too cool, too sober; they expected too little. They expected so little: "It was just like Lady Delucy," was all they said, and as for their perceptions of art, the drums of their ears had been so seasoned for two months past by Verdi's own at the opera, that

they had lost all sensitiveness, *except* to an entirely new excitement, of the brain through the ear — not the outward ear only. Then, besides, as clergymen have no religious objection to going out to dinner (the etiquette of their profession not requiring them to return such entertainments), so there are few persons who will not condescend to be amused—cheated out of a portion of that time which is said to be so short, but which they find so long—for nothing.

The night came, the hour; and hot as was the night, cloudless and breathless, the theatre was crowded before the hour. A rich deep clock-chime struck eight times. Upon the eighth note's last vibration swelled the first chord of the overture—the clock had struck in the same key.

It is said that the marble model which has stood for ages as the test of ideal feminine proportion, affects the beholder with a first impression of insignificant and characterless calm;—that the Pyramids seem to dwindle as they dawn upon the traveller's yearning gaze;—that Niagara's waters shrink, and its thunders soften, from the gigantic dreamed conception of them, when no longer dreamed of, but seen and heard. It is so often with the sublimest creations of the

mind and will; rash and deficient effects in art astonish more suddenly than the transcendental ones conceived in enthusiasm, but born of knowledge, and nurtured by design. So calm in the fulness of development should be a great work, that it startles not but satisfies, so at the brimming cup the lip is athirst no more, and the delighting spirit is at rest.

Such was the character and tendency of the overture—it was listened too rather than judged, that it was original was pardoned, because it was, though eminently original, more beautiful than strange. And it was mournful; never was lost a moment the reminding key-note of the tragedy to come. Beauty, specially in art, seems more divine when mated with melancholy than blent with joy, as a great art exponent acknowledged, in saying that the passions by tragedy are purified.

The curtain rose on Burgos, the superb pictorial city, its fulgent skies empurpling the "solemn towers," and "groves of golden pinnacles." Then human interest began to stir, human sympathy to breathe; from that moment they grew, mightily sustained. As a drama where poetry was wholly passion should, it opened humanly and quietly, without startling incident,

saving only when the two courtiers meeting in the stately street, breathe to each other in hurried dialogue the story of the mysterious swooning of the infanta that morning in Court, when there passed her the returned Alarcos, lately a proud alien, restored thrice as proud a citizen and noble. With this dialogue, suddenly blending the news of Alarcos's marriage during his exile, announced by the page entering; closed the first act.

Then in a rich room of his palace, Alarcos paces, touching a guitar slung from his shoulder, in accompaniment to a sweet French ballad sung by Florimonde, his wife. She sings proudly, joyously, at first—ends mournfully, for an unnatural abstraction wraps Alarcos as in the first mists of the doom that shall hereafter darken into blackness; feebly, fitfully he strikes the strings, at last drops the guitar, then in a duet between the wife and husband their characters first reveal themselves. Her tenderness and devotion, her unworldliness, half feminine, half angelical; his ambition, which shall crush all tenderness, all devotion, with iron heel, his worldliness half manly, half Satanic. And the results yet veiled, are rendered still more dimly prophetic

by the delicate diversion from a too intense contemplation either of the awful chief, or gentle martyr of the plot, occasioned by the entrance of the guests Sidonia and Leon. Alarcos talks lightly with Sidonia, of indifferent things, aside. Florimonde in a thwarting duet with Leon, asks of the morning adventure at the palace of the King, of the swoon of the Infanta, and its cause—*that* unrevealed.

The next scene sweeps to the central interest of the tale. Alarcos is alone in his chamber, the orchestra is wholly brought into play, yet so subdued are all its various voices, that it seems to bind the music and the plot in suspense; ghosts of sound shiver past the strained ears of the audience, as phantoms melt before the eye they momentarily startle. The tones in such mystery are prophetic; there enters a veiled lady, who seems as ghostly, gliding in at those elusive sounds. But Alarcos lifts the veil, the suspense is rent, and the first grand interview between these awful lovers is preceded and accompanied by a tumult of angry and voluptuous harmonies, contrasting their sweetness and their strength like the two conflicting voices. The Solisa of the night is the first contralto, as the Alarcos is

the profoundest bass voice in Europe. In each the will to sustain is equal to the power to produce; an imperious necessity where the scenes are so long, and the passion of the parts rests never, but rises higher and higher, as gradually too as a sea to flood tide, that shall break at last against unyielding rocks. The length of the two scenes where the Infanta first pours forth her passion to Alarcos, then of the King her father demanding the married Alarcos for her husband, is relieved by the length of the symphonies which seem themselves to speak, a cloud of spiritual and wordless witnesses to defiant love, and ambition more defiant still.

No blank silence follows the first act, no space is left for reality to enter and dissolve the dream not yet dreamed out. A delicate and enchanting interlude fills up this space, in which numberless guitars fling their low tinkle over the surface of a profounder theme, as foam into which the deep waves sparkle and melt at their edges. It grows more soft and distant, prevailing yet as the curtain rises once more upon the street; the meeting of Sidonia, the late love-smitten of Florimonde, with the taunting Leon; farther and farther melts the distant music, and is lost as

they begin their commune, so soon disturbed by the entrance of Oran the Moor, rushing in, confessing the crime of murder for which he is pursued, and entreating the protection which Leon yields to him. As the three retreat again, the guitar tone chafes the air—this time a solitary one—and as the scene shifts, there swells above it, yet with it, an impassioned serenade. You hear, but see no minstrel, for the broad golden moonlight streams into a room through the unclosed and fluttering curtains of an open window, and magically mingles with the bright lamplight, amidst which Alarcos stands, as though listening, with an intense pallor on his frowning brow. His sweet wife enters, her arms full of dewy pomegranate and jasmine blooms she has been gathering in her moonlit garden. He bids her listen, harshly, commandingly. She stands beside him, and at the end of the next verse wearily admires. He tells her that *her* beauty inspired the songful importunity: her tortured virtue sobs its resisting plea—in return, the husband pleads the lover's cause—and leaves her.

Then Solisa, alone in her room too, save for the presence of a page, one of those royal toys called Menino, upon whose shoulder a

Spanish princess may lean (though a finger-touch of grown man laid on her raiment's hem will be his death-warrant). Solisa is soon quit of his presence too, for she sends him to the banquet-hall that he may watch the King's conduct to Alarcos, seated near him. Unrols before the eye the banquet-hall, the gold and blue roof bedropt with scarlet stalactites, the silver fountains seen through purpling vistas, the table gleaming and flashing with gold-fringed damask, jewelled goblet, crystal flask; the band of courtiers round with their gem-sparred dresses, and gem-encrusted sword-hilts. There sits Alarcos by the king, his face radiant, covered with unholy smiles—then, when all the guests are dismissed save him alone, it flames with triumph from the dark fire of his eyes. The King in their commune, sustained by each with equal arrogance, now first hints at the possibility of a marriage between Alarcos and Solisa—at the possibility of Florimonde's death. On this horror the curtain falls.

Another interlude—this time no fantastic strain of faery. All the genius of the composer rises to assert itself, all is awhile his own. A noble organ fills the air with a vast Catholic

voluntary, solemn but not severe, imagination pouring forth in praise her whole resources, pure as the unsullied rainbow, every colour of tone is there. And then, when every heart is filled with music, and the thoughts born of it, holy but still impassioned, voices both high and deep in holy chorus swell to meet it, it subsides to be their support, and more plaintive than ever with prayer, that passion born of heaven, the mass begins.

The curtain rises before the last entreaty, "Give us Peace." There stands the dim cathedral, dim for greatness—for not all the altar's illumination, nor all the shining tracery of the lighted chapels, can pierce and scatter those roof-hung mists, that vaulting shade. It is filled to its furthest corner with kneeling figures; at the altar the prior and his train await the last Amen. Across this still picture a strange thwart vision steals: Alarcos, from the front of the stage, staggers into the holy place, advances towards, yet approaches not completely, the place most holy. The last melting chord, the last yearning echo of the voices, are still. With the stillness the altar darkens, yet the chapels gleam afar like arches shaped of flame and amethyst.

The prior's deep voice vibrates through the darkness, strong yet tremulous, inviting all who sin and sorrow to approach him. Alarcos reels to the confessional; the confession all shall hear. He confesses!—oh, hellish perversion of truth by pride and passion—a crime he has not committed. In the anticipation the commission is confirmed—enforced. For though the priest thrusts him not away from the door of hope, no, not when he confesses murder, and the doubly-damning motive of Love and Power, still he turns not to clasp the chance, which *he* knows may be certainty, for he is yet unstained in hand, though the soul be smirched for ever. Unshriven he goes forth, with dry eyes, stainless hand, and the lust of blood raging in his veins with hotter madness.

Then begins the anarchy of passions, in which all love changes to lust, whether for power or for possession of that *once* loved. The Infanta, alone with her father, again demands, this time without reserve or patience, that Alarcos shall be hers. Her father, scared from self-confidence, refers her to Alarcos only, and, referred to Alarcos, she sacrifices every attribute of a woman except her sex; she urges their union before the

suit which shall release him from his present marriage can be settled by the church.

From this moment the scent of murder seems to taint the entire plot. Leon, who hates Alarcos for his supremacy at court which still prevails, would kill him, but not with his own hand. In return for his protection of Oran the Moor, he demands of him that he shall kill Alarcos. Oran seems to promise such allegiance, but will not act alone: four hired murderers do his bidding —rush upon Alarcos as he passes—boasting beforehand of success in a savage quartette, helped by brazen discords; they are scattered in an instant by the lightning of Alarcos' steel. Oran remains to fight with him—falls wounded by the same charmed arm, but not to die—rises burdened with a deadly oath that for the life now spared him, he will take a life for him who spares. The voice of the vow is terrible, the music rages, the dim dream of horror begins to dawn as real.

The horror is again suspended, again the audience breathes. The strains relenting, grow thin, gay, drop off one by one, and between the third and fourth act you hear a solitary mandolin. It is a monotonous, yet merry dance-measure.

Soon it illustrates, as it were, a vignette of refined pictorial comedy; a gipsy-girl dances to the measure of the mandolin in an inn room, her lithe dark form bathed in fire-light flushes: they gleam, too, on a group seated round a table; dark faces, dark forms, drinking recklessly, drowning now and then the music with their jokes and proverbs. The door opens, a masked stranger enters, shakes a purse in the fire-light, asks for Oran—the tragic tone is instantly restored—nor lost again. Sidonia tells Florimonde where she may see her husband with Solisa. Her tenderness is too deeply probed where so deeply wounded. She would find him faithful whom she yet believes so. She consents. She enters the palace-garden like an angel clothed in white; the moon drops on her a veil of silvery beams, and on the fretted marbles, plashing fountains, bloom-starred myrtles, whose perfume fills the theatre, seeming to float upon the wings of the almost whispering melodies that are as though the leaves should shiver, and the winds and waters murmur themselves in music. There is no Alarcos in this solitude, and no Solisa; but Sidonia rushes in to carry her away. Fast and thick multiply the tragic phases rush-

ing to consummation. Oran bursts upon the scene, beats off Sidonia. Florimonde swoons upon the earth. There is a sudden gleam of torches—a procession in the midst—the Infanta, who returns to her home from mass. She sees the lovely lady, knows not Florimonde, bids them bear her to her own chamber. Alarcos enters, his wife and he meet eye to eye. Now and then, from that moment, the sweet voice in its pure tones rises in entreaty, in wonder, over the vast and awful deceit between the Infanta and Alarcos. The voices beat down, as it were, the orchestra, one against the other. They break and rage. Solisa, at the crowning moment, in a blind agony snatches the dagger of Alarcos —she rushes to the couch of Florimonde. But with a rending imprecation he arrests her hand: for the crime must be complete, to merit the retribution stored in heaven.

Once more, for the last time, the palace of Alarcos rears its turrets; light from the noonday falls dazzling on its terraces. Once more, for the last time, on those terraces walks Florimonde—for the last time sings a swan's song, a dream of death, which to her pure soul is only heaven, and which echoes from angel

harps and voices seem to answer. Oran enters, his brow gloomy with a pallid cloud; the magnetic vision of his unmixed race detects the doom with which the air is charged, with quivering finger points he out, with deep trembling voice announces, the little cloud, like a man's hand, swelled just faintly as a grey moon-crescent on the burning blue of heaven. The scene shifts, the blue dazzle, the delicate dread portent are swept away.

Once more the palace halls break stately on the eye, their light puts out the light of day, tenfold radiance streams from the golden roof, tenfold flames the jewel-blaze. The hall of Belshazzar glared not with more awful splendour. There is a feast of melody, a surfeit of delighting sound—but ever and anon the music surges underneath. Is its fury a portent? Does the storm tread heaven more near the earth? The music rages as Solisa and Alarcos meet. They come to the front of the stage—the dancers move behind them—none approach. That night she will possess Alarcos, her impellant passion rushes through her lips—his answer shudders from his own. A moment more, and he is gone.

The golden lights are quenched, darkness wraps the stage—seems to wrap the orchestra. Not long; from a labyrinth of low, groping tones, breaks in music thunder—thunder with mountain echoes—still harmony, but too profound to trace, as all colours are absorbed in black. Blue, white, and livid lightnings thwart the blackness of the stage, and in one broad cleaving gleam you see a charger, black as hell; you see Alarcos on him, his face lit up white by the lightnings, which light the foam of the charger up like snow—and you see that the lightnings not stream and shiver only round, but cling to him; pale fire, a mail of electric lustre, horrid as a mist of hell, grows and gathers to his garments as he rides through the storm to murder Florimonde.

He is at home, the storm is spent, the thunder-pulses throb less heavily, the lightning seems to smile. Oran enters. Alarcos demands of him the fulfilment of his murderous vow. At the last moment of life this stained soul puts on the robe of purity which shall clothe him fit for heaven. Oran will not take the life of Florimonde. Alarcos persists. Cold with pride, even then, he would spare his own hand from stain.

Oran, to spare his own heart, with his own stained hand, stabs himself. Florimonde, paler now than all, save death and the dying, rushes in—her hand touches the wound—he dies in Paradise of that touch.

The husband and wife are alone upon the stage; no longer she pleads—no more he quails beneath her holy eyes: there is no more thunder, nor passion, nor love. He sends her to embrace her children before the long, long journey he is going to send her; can a soul so black know how short is the journey for a soul all light to Heaven? One cry breaks from her heart—no more—her heart is broken. No more the music rages; but while the stage is empty, void of all save dead Oran's body, an ineffable movement fills the orchestra, of soft woe, of solemn triumph, that from many an eye draws tears.

Alarcos returns—alone; the violins break from the ranks of harmony with shuddering discord—they upbraid with spirit-like shriek and groan the miracle of crime accomplished. A clanging chaos both of sweet and awful sounds succeeds—a trumpet blast suspends it—another, and the chaos responds in calm—a third, and silence answers. In the silence, as the sinner

stands alone, the messenger enters. In recitative, which the wind instruments support in simple unison, lending an intense distinctness to the appalling words, the tale is told.

The storm was spent, because its work was done; the avenging angel had returned to heaven in its track. The bolt had fallen,

> "Winged from the startling blue of Heaven,
> And struck—the Infanta."

Alarcos falls—self-sent to hell. Or has the retribution, equal—and only equal—to the crime, already been sufficient? Has not there been a sacrifice besides?

No pictorial art, nor stage-phantasm, exhibiting to the eye the similitude of that retribution, would have affected the audience at the crowning crisis of suspense, like that severe and simple recitation, with the unisons of tone. It was like truth, not drama—a fact, not a representation. There was a moral, and all perceived it. At the last dark word of Alarcos ere he fell, the twilight stage grew darker, as he fell there was darkness —with the dark there was silence, and the curtain fell.

He who was most difficult to satisfy through the ear, and whose verdict decided the press,

was the first to raise his voice—others had waited for him, and applauded that—more and more swelled the tribute, till it burst from every lip. The "hundred-tongued" had said Amen, to the artist's first prayer to art.

Be it not, oh listening devotee, self-adoring, adoring thine own creation—be not this first prayer to art thy last aspiration towards a Divinity higher than that as the heavens are higher than the earth! This was Lady Delucy's first hope for him, breathed to her own heart only, when she knew his first hope fulfilled.

He went home. For him, that sultry and clouded August night, the sun rose upon the landscape of his life. Sitting in a slip of room whose small dull window showed no peeping star, where no lamp burned, where no board was spread, no flask filled, he was intoxicated, but not with wine. No fumes curled round his brain, confusing fact and fancy in their genial heat; but a foretaste filled his being of life to be longed for, loathed no more—a generous existence budding, that should blossom in blissful hours, and drop ripe fruits in the footsteps of the future. And even as the deep luscious draughts of nectar quaffed at feasts Olympian, stimulated

the thirst of hero-deities to greater exploits, more surpassing pleasures; so now the soul of the musician swelled in him, illimitably to expand the brightness of his art—shall we not sigh to say besides, his own glory? A delirium of rapture, whose clouds were golden as they pressed upon his brow, and burned in his sharpened pulses, revealed that fever which was but joy excessive, excessive unto pain. How long he sat, like one that mused in the midst of madness, lost in thoughts that seemed vaster than his own soul, he knew not; in such wild meditation time is annihilated, and yet more in love. For all through that golden atmosphere, itself so bright, there flashed an image which was its sun, and it was a tangible vision which ruled the being no longer consecrated to art alone, and the self-love she almost makes divine.

CHAPTER XI.

No marvel that the old world enwrapt itself in mysterious creeds of destiny, of doom, of solar and astral influences; when the laws which govern organisation were unknown, and a man determined not by any physiological deductions, the difference between himself and other men. In this life of sadness and probation, where to the philosopher, the idealist, and the saint, even rapture is but a milder melancholy than woe; we are never astonished to see troubled faces, to read strange and tragic stories in men's eyes; we do not wonder at the care-wasted, the passion-worn, the calm-despairing; but we are surprised at success, and more than all, when the successful can appreciate and delight in it. Perhaps

the sympathy and interest excited in the minds of a few, by a writer or artist of special character and feeling, however much attesting originality and exclusive talent, yet show, that to the power of such a mind a limit is set, by some encroaching mortal weakness, or too intense spiritualism. A really vast genius in art will affect all classes, and touch even the uninitiated with trembling and delight, and penetrate even the ignorant with strong if transient spell, as the galvanic energy binds each and all who embrace in the chain-circle of grasping hands in the shock of perfect sympathy.

As for this opera of Alarcos, not only were the three performances of its free inauguration attended by every invited person, but the first performance the week afterwards, for which tickets were issued, as from any other theatre, was thronged to the doors, and many were turned away. Then, after a day or two, came the reviews—those anatomical preparations of words which fresh authors think as much too important at first, as they grow to think too little important afterwards. The reviews in this case were all favourable, however ignorantly they dealt with their subject—except in one instance, where

wisdom and approbation went hand in hand. Lady Delucy sent all the reviews to the composer, for no one knew where he was, and through her only could he be communicated with. She gave him time to read them, for she deemed the joys of triumph as sacred as the torture of disappointment; and then, as he came not to her, she went to him. It was the first time she had been to his lodgings; and she took his mother with her up stairs, leaving her outside the door. She knocked—there was no answer—nor any when she knocked again. Was it not absurd to treat him like a man after all? Was he not young enough to have been her child? So she turned the handle gently, and went in. He was sitting at the table, in an attic bare of any furniture save a bed, a chair, and table, a piano, and a stool. He was writing; sheets lay all about him ready for the press; all the reviews lay in a heap on the floor—at least, there lay the papers that contained them. As the lady entered, he looked up and frowned, at the same time a flush, ever rare upon his face, reddened it, but it did not look like the crimson of anger or irritation. His words explained it partly.

"I did not know it was you, lady, or I had not been so rude. I tell my mother she is to knock if she wants me, which she has no occasion to do at all; however, she is to knock—and if I don't answer her, to knock again; if I don't speak then, she is to go away—not to knock a third time. But you, lady, should not have knocked—you should have come in straight. How could I have expected, even if I had guessed, it might be you? You have been away so long, forgetting me entirely. There is one comfort though, you have forgotten me for something, which is also of me, but greater than myself." All this time he went on writing—it was evident that his abstraction was not of the higher faculties.

"Why do you write so hard?" asked Lady Delucy, sitting down on the music stool.

"I want to pay you. Suppose I die first—such a debt would darken my purest renown. But no one knows it, only I. Is not my purest renown *your* approbation?"

"You have read those?" she asked, kindly and smilingly, pointing to the papers in the corner.

"How can persons criticise music unless they are musicians—equal, besides, to the music they

criticise? It is different with books—everybody writes now, and critics better than authors. But music! Those are all stuff, except one, and that makes up for all the rest. That is good and true, and a master must have written it—a master, at least, of words, and of the secret of composition, whether he can create or not. I should like to see him. As for the other notices, they will light the fire, just as these rags and scraps, which are paper-money now to me, will one day light future fires."

"I do wonder how you can write so," she exclaimed, turning over waltzes, and ballads, and fantasias, all brilliant and of marked effect, yet all endowed with that extreme facility for voice and finger, which none but the composer who has surmounted the last difficulty, can impart with ease.

"They make me bitter on myself—they are degrading, but only for a time. They sell—oh, how they sell! And yet there is one thing more; for soon all the women, whose fools of parents, and greater fools of teachers, have told that they have soprano voices, will scream the holy songs of Florimonde; and the rest, who cannot even scream, yet will sing—will scrape their throats

with the deep passion of Solisa. Soon, soon," and he sighed—"that is the worst part. I do not know whether in the midst, it was after all the consciousness that by my power alone, that crowd was kept so still to listen. I do not know that the delight was there—something stronger still, not of myself, nor them, sustained me."

"Ah! yes."

"You, who love art, and lie not as hundreds do who say they love it, you know that art is solace and strength alone. Yet, when it was over, how was it that the memory was not stronger? it should have been, and sufficient too. Why the memory was worth less than the anticipation. It is this; there were faults, there was weakness, none else perceived them. I alone can criticise and reform myself. Next time it must be stronger, it must annihilate the fame of this—the sun must put out the little light of this morning star. Stop, lady, do not go, the man is coming directly for these; will you wait, for I wish to ask you another favour. Not a big one, a very little one, the least you can grant, much less than many I shall ask you."

He glanced at her with sudden sparkling eyes,

but she saw them not, she was patiently untying the strings of her bonnet, for truly she humoured him too much; she waited. For half an hour he went on writing, then made the papers into a packet, fastened the string and seal with deft fingers, and taking it outside the door, threw it to the bottom of the stairs, and came in again.

"There will be no more of Alarcos till the spring," he said; "and as everybody who is fine is going into the country, I suppose you are going too, lady." This, with a sneer.

"I shall go, my daughter's health requires it, and I hope you are coming with me, it will do you much more good to write there. I shall not go for a week, however."

"Well, I am not coming to your country house, at least I do not know yet. But never mind that, I want you, lady, to take me with you to one of those parties you told me of, where you wished to take me before, and I would not go, because I would not be insignificant among the insignificant. Above all, among those who rule. I want to see your celebrated persons, your literary ones, those of whom men talk, and for whom women feel the most. You know what you told

me about fame and fashion. I wish to see both, for I am now famous, and you know it—you cannot be ashamed."

"Ashamed, I should be proud, but I am wondering where to take you, for so many people are gone; there are dinners, certainly."

"Oh! I could not sit still for those, nor eat their food. I only eat pulse and drink water, like the Hebrew children, who grew so strong."

"It is also very difficult to gather the celebrated persons together. The most famous poetess is in Italy; the poet laureate has not been in London all the summer. Our greatest painter is just dead."

"I thought Romana was your greatest painter, he thinks himself so, I know."

"I do not think he does—however, he is *not*. He will never be buried, as our king painter lies, in St. Paul's Cathedral."

"I would rather be buried there," pointing to the towers of the abbey, which were the only fair sight from the garret window. "Yet—buried, no, it is not time to die;" then he shivered. "But after letting the whole world know, I would return and give my ashes to the dust beneath the feet of those who first confessed me.

I will not yet die—love me not too well, ye gods! I could not die young, for there is weakness, if the body fails before the brain, and I am strong."

Yes, thought the lady, as she looked at his frame, delicate but compact, like fine wrought iron, no gossamer frostwork; at his youth-keen eyes, that almost pained her vision with their piercing centre-spark; at his brow of grainlike granite, and almost of granite hardness; not the polish which on certain ivory-like temples attests the most fragile of all God's structures to enclose the spirit. Strong, she recurred again to the word, yes, too strong to die, but strong enough to suffer till death is yearned for, yet will not come. Strange too, she thought, that man, strong man, pities the early dead; those who fall as flowers under the sickle with the dew yet upon their leaves; and he deems long life, with the failure of "desire," at last, a sublimer fate!

"Shall I disgrace you, if you take me with you?" he asked suddenly, seeing her fair countenance so grave, regarding him.

"Shall you be ashamed of *me*?" she answered, smiling again as only she could smile. "I was not thinking about it at all. But fear not, your artistic pre-eminence will give you

fame, and your eccentricity, because it is natural to you, will give you fashion."

"One thing, lady, more. If *you* ask me to play, or to play for you if you sing, I will do it; but if anyone else asks me, I will go out of the house, and leave you to tell them why."

"You will be fashionable," she said, laughing, "you need not even change your coat."

Lady Delucy at last selected an evening to take him into public. She did not choose to make market out of him by introducing him at her own house, not because—though studiously conscientious in the fulfilment of her social claims, though no one could be more profitable and hearty in the part of hostess,—she did not love society; only submitted to it with a patience and self-denial very peculiar, as peculiar as her distaste for it, which scarcely any of her sex share, and none save those flitting exceptions would believe. But she would not exhibit Rodomant at her house, because in that case she must perforce be pre-occupied, and unable to watch him. She took a strange and passionate interest in this young heart, which had for its companion in the flesh, so strong a spirit and precociously mature a genius. She knew him yet so pure in

life, by the instinct which is left only to the pure in heart; and she trembled for the tests that must await him, for, perhaps, than the artist, none meet with temptations more manifold, or more difficult to resist.

Not till the rigorously fashionable had left town, could she find an evening on which to fulfil even the least part of his request. She went to fetch him alone, for Elisabeth, who affected society even less than her mother, though from a more obvious cause, would not go out that night, she was writing a letter which was a volume, for the Indian Mail. Rodomant kept his patroness waiting a long time, and when he at last appeared and took his seat opposite her own, he declared that he did not want to go at all, and only went to please her. "I was writing," said he, "a special song for you, and when we come back to-night, I will sing it to you." "It will be too late then," she said, "and besides, may I not sing it myself?" "I said a song for you, not a song for you to sing. It cannot be too late, it is a song to sing at night, and I shall sing it at twelve, or two, or three." Then he threw himself back in the carriage, and deranged his hair with his hands, though an accomplished hair-dresser had arranged and cut it,

and carried away a harvest of the soft brown sweepings for ladies' fronts. And he was carefully, even fashionably attired, to the lady's surprise, for he had only worn one coat since his arrival in England, and that was so fretted and threadbare that it was a wonder it did not fall to pieces; though in spite of this carelessness in respect of those incumbrances (the costlier the greater) called clothes, he had that mania for the bath, which is the most certain certificate of refined blood, however distant from their source its filtered drops may flow. When they arrived, he was in such a dream, that the lady had to address him three times before he stirred, though he smiled each time she spoke, as sleepers smile in slumber at some sweet instinct of a dream. At last he crept out, noiselessly, after her, and into a hall of one of those large new houses, whose fronts flaunt at Hyde Park, and cast their mocking shadow over the small old-style abodes which pertain to families of style antique, which they have too strong taste to modernise. These large new houses meet the exigency of the times, rich tradespeople, doctors who are fashionable and would be rich, and certain clergymen who can afford to be fashionable, rent them generally;

but they often change their tenants. To Rodomant, bred in an old German town, where, instead of convenience, ruled the picturesque, a town out of the route of tourists, and only visited by art-students and bookworms, this house was a fairy-palace. He saw no new furniture, nor brilliant appointments at Lady Delucy's house; she gave away a great deal too much to be able to afford them; for to be really generous, even the rich must deny themselves—to be generous according to their means—we speak not of just charities which men perform (as they go to church) for fear of not going to Heaven when their change shall come. And Rodomant's delight in illusion was like that of the German child, and up to that time had been as cheaply satisfied as the German child is satisfied with its formal tree at Christmas, its gingerbread monstrosities, frightful toys, and flickering tapers; such as a French child would flout, and of which an English child would without fail enquire, how much (or rather how little) such a paltry show had cost?

"Whose house is this?" enquired Rodomant, lingering on the first landing, and staring at everything as a matchless spectacle.

"Whose think you?" returned the lady, humouring him, though she took care to speak in German while the servants were at hand.

"An ambassador's, the Russian ambassador's, no doubt."

"It is the house of a publisher; do you remember the dark shop I showed you in the city the other day?"

"Where the man sold books written by other persons? Yes."

"This is his house, his home."

Further, he had just thought fit to marry, which might excuse, as well as account for the fact that in the house was everything completely new, new as a servant-maid's bonnet on Easter Sunday; therefore, and only therefore, the least vulgar. There, in the drawing-room, were the inevitable gold-coloured curtains which the sage housewife knows light up so well; there the chandeliers of Osler, the carpets of Crossley, the musical instruments of Erard; there the dull books clothed, like many a dull person, in costly dresses; there the portfolios of those standard engravings which everybody buys, and therefore nobody looks at; there were the copies of copies, the mimics of models, the patented elegancies

which have inundated society since the opening of the Crystal Palace; there were the countless photographs of known and unknown, wise and foolish portraits which have palled upon the sense of sight since science (vainly) sought a rivalry with art. Earnestly, indeed, must these moneyspinners grub all the morning, to burst into such splendid butterflies at night. Lady Delucy found it hard work to get up to the master of the house, and to pull her companion with her, and at last, having succeeded in introducing him, he shrank away into a corner, and not shyly, but cynically, surveyed the people present, who by no means seemed to charm his fancy like the room itself.

"Are all these people famous?" he demanded, dryly, "for there are so many of them, that in that case it would be more original to be a fool."

"I have not recognized one yet, I will look out." She cast her eyes round and through the crowd, wherever it divided.

"Do you see," she said at last, "that gentleman who leans against the wall?"

"To whom everybody speaks, as they pass, while he bows without moving his lips?"

"What think you of him?"

"He would not be so ugly, if he did not look so awful; grave as the grave, he is gray, not only his hair, but his face; he is cold and grim as a winter's night; he is like old death. He must be miserable, and born to make others so."

"He is the most famous person present, and deserves his fame. He is a very great writer, perhaps the greatest, some say so. He is a popular idol now, and a word from his lips is much more cared for than the queen's sweetest speech."

"Then he is very ungrateful to look so. Is it not ingratitude, lady?"

"I think not; the follies of others have worn him low, this vain world afflicts him, for he is good. He sees through all material things, and the motives of selfish men, as a surgeon would see you an unclothed skeleton, and watch the coursing of your blood."

"But surgeons do not suffer as *he* looks to suffer on account of the sufferings of others; they are not leaden-pale, they do not wince."

"Did you see him wince?" thought the lady—then aloud: "It may be good for you to know what the famous have to bear, despite their fame. That man is in constant torture, nameless, un-

known—torture that at last must kill; torture that wrestles with time yet cannot strangle it. He must, and he will, endure to the end,—but how long? Who shall tell the length of moments, made millenniums by pain? yet blessed, thrice blessed, if so intensely purified." Tears stood in her maternal eyes, tears soon gathering ever in them, yet seldom or never falling. The young adept in art who knew of nothing else, looked at her with wonder; he had fought with the goblin nerve-shadows, and deemed them agony's own substance; what more then was that real agony, which, as she spoke, he felt he did *not* know?"

"Do you mean, lady, that he is made to suffer because he is famous? I do not see the necessity, if he is good."

"Just because he *is* good. I grant there have been—may have been, rather, for my creed disclaims the dogma—famous men who have never suffered in just proportion to their triumph. These men were doubtless *not* good. Yet who shall say that the unutterable iniquities of the greatest tyrants have not been recompensed by fears as unutterable. Alarcos might have taught you that."

"That is a poem; these are real men. Well, lady, surely some few are born under a morning star. There is Romana come in, with his beautiful, golden wife. What will you tell me of him? he, at least, *looks* happy."

"Yes, now. There shines upon him that rainbow which, seen at *morning*, they do say warns us of storm before the night. Happy, I grant you, in his home; and he would be entirely so if he could only look to home for happiness, but he cannot; his vivid talents counterfeit genius to his own partial eye. Because he cannot create, he esteems combination above creation. Yet, as in all cases where the intellectual conscience is not self-satisfied, he is intensely conscious that his is but a class-reputation—nor is that class the *first* class."

"And anything else is—yes, you are right, lady, it is despicable; I would not pick it up."

"Then see the glaring melancholy of his eye. He knows that as his fame is sectarian, so his artistic revelations are narrow of conception, just as they are of completion overwrought. He feels defects he cannot remedy; he can see where he cannot soar; yet, in comparison with many, known and gifted, he is happy—for his nature is

all reverence, his principles are incorrupt. Know you, my young friend, that it is not so with all who stand in the light of all men's eyes for judgment."

"Who," asked Rodomant, after a musing moment, in which he seemed to drink down her meaning as a child at its mother's knee when she speaks of God—"Who is that man like a wild beast—a tame beast, rather, who is talking with his mouth wide open like a frog, to a very beautiful young lady, and who looks as though he wished to eat her, and was measuring in his eye exactly where he should begin. Surely, he is king of the cannibals, and she is not safe."

"Your tame beast is your critic, the man whose master-words about a master-work you prized so dearly; the young lady you call so beautiful is indeed beautiful, though not young: she has been called for twenty years the rose of all the seasons. She is cold, and hard, and heartless; *her* fame was her beauty, and she was not tender-minded enough to give her beauty (all she had to give) to any other heart."

"I don't call beauty fame; have women no other? and if they have, surely they are purer than men."

"Men and women are equal sinners, I believe. But when I remember what women ought to be, what is their protection from the temptations which harass men the most, I must confess to honouring men the most; this is doubtless a woman's faith, but so it possesses me. I will give you two instances, that you may not think too well of women, for even that is dangerous."

"I should never think well of *women*, for I should never think at all except of *one* woman."

"Listen," said the lady, who, though she did not clearly comprehend, did not like this speech. "You see the lady yonder with men all round her, she who bends to them as though she were a queen. Many crowns she wore as her right, for the many rights of genius were hers; but the last crown she took to herself she usurps in wearing; it is another's, only the real queen is dead, and there is no one brave enough to pluck the crown from the brow of her who wears it falsely."

"I don't understand one word," said Rodomant, confused, and no wonder, at the lady's sudden indignation, which filled her clear forehead as with the light of fire, and trembled on her lips.

"I will tell you. The greatest genius among women in this country died a year ago. Till that woman died no one knew who she was, she lived alone like a white snowdrop springing from a snow-bound sod in a wild wintry field. Pure as snow she lived, died sudden as a snowdrop under the earliest warmth of spring. That woman had written a book the whole world read, in every tongue the tale was told, it rung in every ear. At the end of the book there was the touching history of a man whose eyes were put out in his head, blinded by the fall of a rafter from a burning house. This may sound a simple incident enough to you who have not read the book, but let me tell you that the beauty and perfection of the book depend upon it. The woman he has loved, and who, to save her soul's peace and his, left him long before, found him when he was blind, comforted and loved him, then stayed with him for ever. Now I tell you that the queen on the sofa out there, writing a poem, and not knowing how to finish it, adopted that incident just as it was written in the book of the dead authoress, and wrote it in her own. A man struck blind by the fall of a burning brand, and a woman restored to his love just afterwards.

And yet not a single critic noticed this literary imitation."

"As far as I understand, that is an evil story, but you must show me the book, lady, and the poem, then I shall understand it all. It seems better to be sorrowful than wicked; of this, I am determined—that I will be neither. Are there any more women who have done such things?"

"You shall hear of one more, because she is here. See her there, she is pale, and very fair, yet you shall acknowledge that she looks of all here, least at ease. When she was very young she was to be married to a man worthy of all love, as perfect a person as can be found on earth; she loved him too, with all her mind and strength—I do not say her heart and soul, because if a heart is really touched, it must be constant, if a soul is filled, it cannot fail in faith. Her lover was drowned, just before the day appointed for their marriage. Well, she was, and is, a poetess; she wrote an entire book about him, the most exquisite memorial that ever immortalised a man on earth; it made his remembrance fragrant as an imperishable violet, worn in every breast. No book ever drew such

sympathy of tears from human eyes. The very first poem in the book was an assumption of perpetual virginity. She wore that virgin widowhood for fifteen years, and then"—

"She died, of course."

"She married."

"And what did the world say?"

"It said no more than about that plagiarist who appropriated an incident from a dead writer, and that writer a sister-woman. The world smiled at the marriage contract, and went to the wedding.",

"I will come to no more parties with you, lady; I wish I had not come at all, to hear these ugly stories. But one thing you shall see, that there shall be one famous who never wearies of fame, nor of trying to deserve it. One happy, who yet shall deserve his happiness."

He spoke low and very fast, and a sudden mortification fell upon him, as he remarked that the lady did not seem to attend. Suddenly she had dropped as it were the thread of the association. She was looking at the door through which three persons were entering—Geraldine, Geraldi, and Diamid Albany.

CHAPTER XII.

Had not Lady Delucy been altogether astonished at Geraldine's looks, she would have certainly been as much surprised at the appearance at all in public, of the boy her cousin. As it was, she did not turn her eyes on Geraldi, which, after a cordial if not glad greeting of Albany himself, she fastened on Geraldine with inquiring distress. "My dear child," she said, in the lowest whisper, while the hand of Geraldine touched hers, "how very ill you look! surely you should not be here."

But Geraldine withdrew her fingers, and for answer gave a flashing defiance from her troubled eye, such a glance as might shoot from the eye of the dove when it saw the hawk descending on

its brood. She was so thin that, but for her symmetry, she could not have appeared in the dress evening society demands.

"And why was she there?" thought the lady—"why, above all things, had Diamid brought her to a party at a publisher's, not even his own publisher's either, whom to conciliate on his own account, it had ceased to be needful years and years before?" Meantime, while she wondered, while Geraldine dealt her scorning gaze, and Diamid looked intentionally unmeaning at them both, Geraldi, whom nobody observed, slipped secretly a small sealed note into the hand of Rodomant, whispering curtly that he was not to read it until he found himself alone.

If Lady Delucy had not so preoccupied herself with that same neophyte of hers, she would have heard that every one in the room that night was speaking of a new book, which some had, some had not read, but of which all who had, were speaking in terms of wonder and curiosity, which decided those who had not—even those who never read anything, and those who, reading everything, have time for nothing, to "get it," as they would have said, directly. The publisher was the only person, who for reasons of his own, held his

tongue on the subject. The manuscript had been dropped into the letterbox of his house of business, after business hours, the delicate backward writing was not to be identified, and it was made a free gift to him, on condition of its immediate production by the press. The man (who read his own books—no book-taster for him)—knew when he had read a dozen pages, that to publish it would incur for himself no risk. Good or bad, the work of creative genius or morbid imagination, it was enough for one so shrewd that such a book had never before been written; the subject, the matter, and the manner, all were new.

Yet, after all, what was this fame virginal? As far as what the people said—and an evening party in a drawing-room is a fair sample of the great, gay, talking world—their excitement and its expression much resembled those invoked by a new member's maiden speech in Parliament, on the night it is uttered—and forgotten. Cheers in surges, volleys of hisses, popguns of applause. Every one who knew Albany well enough to dare to speak to him, asked him whether he had read this book; without equivocation he contrived to avoid an answer by demanding to have it described.

As soon as each speaker left his side he stole a glance at Geraldine, but a glance which was carefully bereft of all inquietude or interest. Ill as Lady Delucy had thought her, it had not been because she was pale, for a narcotic, which was to her young constitution a vivid stimulus, had filled her veins with fiery life and her cheeks with fiery colour—her brain with fiery phantoms too. This brilliance burned itself slowly out; she was pale as snow in twilight, her eye softened languidly, her frame drooped with greater lassitude. The man of wisdom and experience by her side, he who had lived so long, could not understand this mood. But, in truth, the glory which Geraldine had created for herself, the halo which in clear, contemplative solitude she saw round her own fair head, faded altogether in that artificial light. Each trivial verdict from lips of the frivolous and fashionable, took out of her some portion of her pride. She knew not how it was; she only knew that she had, as it were, fallen from heaven, or wakened from some deep Italian summer, come back to her in a happy dream of sleep, to a November morning of cold, stifling fog, laden with snow instead of thunder. She herself had besought Diamid to take her where

there would be the best chance for her to hear her book spoken of. He had calculated the time, and just a week after it was out, before the reviews began, he did take her, certainly to the most likely place. Nor had her desires been disappointed. She had not only heard it spoken of, but discussed; if much dispraised, also violently approved. Therefore, he understood not, for the first time, Geraldine. When he had heard his first work spoken of he had been excited, enchanted, satisfied. He did not know that it was not only the difference of sex, distinctly defined, as it is not always, between himself and her, but the difference between Geraldine and others of her own sex, particularly the class authoresque of women. For, say what men will of them, and women can say for themselves, there are very few feminine writers who are intensely, and to the heart of hearts, physically and morally, perfect feminine natures. In their lives, their loves, their marriages; as wives and mothers, how many of them are ideals of womanhood, whom an ideal nature among men would long to clasp as his own? At the same time, it is true, that there are many women so intensely feminine, that they would not write, to publish,

if they could, too proud, because too wise, to expose their feelings to a world made up of persons with whom they neither hold communion nor have sympathy. But such a case as a woman thus intensely feminine, thus proud and modest, betraying herself to the world in her writings, is an exception, and one in the whole world the most rare. For such must be her innocence of the world even if in it, such her ideal condition alike of thought and feeling, that she thinks not of it as it is, nor feels for individuals as they are, necessarily and happily, all unlike herself. Let none envy the exceptional, those whose fate it is to weave rainbows into the awful web of being, whose fathomless heart-springs brim the fountains of imagination with eternal freshness, while the dream-flowers nurtured by that freshness only bloom to die. It is no characteristic, no destiny to be coveted by the selfish for themselves, or by parents loving and unselfish, for their children. If these exceptional beings are weak or false to their own estimates—if on the least scrutiny a flaw is found, then they do evil in this evil world. If they are strong, and pure, and shrink not to declare that they know—nay, all the more if their mind's history is a page clean as drifted

snow—then must they endure to the end, perhaps find that end the martyr's fate without his fame.

Geraldine was born a poetess. None, save the trees, whose still stateliness shaded her, the silent statues, and flowers lovely enough to inspire for each blossom a new-made song, had been audience to her wild improvisations. Doubtless, finer images, more delicate phrases, sweeter heart-confessions, more melodious eloquence, dropped from her young lips in those hours of the play-time of her genius, than distilled from the pages of her first essay at English composition. As for her pleasure in writing, it was just what everyone experiences in doing what they do most naturally. As for her ambition, it was but the reflex of her husband's—the ambition, not to do a thing for its own sake, or for love's sake—sweeter still; but that others, and as many others as possible, may approve, applaud, perhaps envy. But just as she adopted all his political views without understanding them, all his opinions of men she had never seen, all his verdicts of books she had never opened—so it was enough for him to say he desired her to be a famous woman, to make her desire and determine to be one—yea, with a diseased and raging desire, like the fever after inoculation.

Before we know ourselves, God knows us; and when that shock of self-knowledge comes, and but for Him we should be alone, we have his sympathy. Blessing never sufficiently appreciated, that of the isolation of each soul, at certain times, which the more it divides us from each other, the more it draws us to the love of Him, from whom we can hide nothing. As Geraldine felt that night, she was for the first time divided from her husband, he understood not the disappointment which had fallen on her hopes a blight; her idol for the first time was insufficient, as all idols are at last. Then for the first time, too, her soul realised its Maker. Neither as sadness nor joy, trouble nor triumph, came that real conception—it was quiet as the echo of a still, small voice. Oh! divine dawn of faith, which is neither the hour of baptism, nor the first-lisped affirmative of the creed Christian, nor the day when the parental conscience is released by the Church from the responsibility of the child's salvation; but the instant, a space that cannot be reckoned in time —when the soul feels its need of God, and finds that need destroyed for ever by His presence—before he called He answered it.

If Lady Delucy had possessed any worldly

pride, it would have received many a sharp side-thrust, and many a rankling sting from the style in which she had been treated ever since her husband's death. Nobody ever forgot she had been an actress—people took care to show that the respect they paid was to her rank, not to her—while to her character they condescended. A woman whose mother had fallen, is not judged so severely by half. Yet it is not exactly the fault of each person who so conducts himself that so he acts; it is the absolute impossibility for those who care supremely about wealth, and secondarily, about social position, to assimilate with the personality of artists. When Lady Delucy, therefore, was asked, as a private individual, to sing, it was rather as though she were commanded (having been prepaid) to do so. She cared for none of this treatment—it afflicted her not, and she always did her best in every company, loving art so dearly, that it was a pleasure of which she never wearied to lend it even the least and most partial interpretation. So being asked to sing by the wife of the host, a young woman who was accustomed to sit with her feet on the fender, and give her opinion upon the manuscripts of master-writers, and who thought

herself a genius because she did so, Lady Delucy ascended calmly, and asked Rodomant to accompany her. Most exquisite was the accompaniment which bore the exquisite voice on its melodious ripple, and mild as sunshine with a southern breeze seemed the player's mood. People stared, of course, to see that the lady did not accompany herself, as she had ever done before, and little imps of suspicion glanced at each other from eye to eye, more especially as this strange person had never left, the whole evening, the side of the lady who had the reputation for doing the strangest things. As for Geraldine, the only person present who did not connect the lady with the player for an instant, she experienced a mortification, bitter even after all the bitterness of the hour, in seeing that Diamid drank down the music, seemed to hang upon the voice, and was evidently soothed by both, as it was seldom he was quieted by anything. How, thought she, in her passionate impatience forgetting that for him, by any and all means, she coveted above all things, rest—how could he listen, attend to anything, think of anything, but me to-night? He was thinking, she could not, as a woman, dream how deeply, wildly, with what wondering and wistful

tenderness, he was thinking only of her, and that delicate renown of hers which, to his worshipping appreciation, it seemed must be sullied by being questioned or even admitted. He was lost in a transport of melancholy love, which would have drowned him in tears in the hard-faced presence of that fashionable company, if it had not been for the sweet sustaining presence of the woman who had been, all life, his kindest and most faithful friend; therefore his eyes rested on her eyes, not on those which were his only heaven, and therefore he inclined his ear to the lulling measure of her voice.

Everyone listened now—so refined, yet genial, was the strain—not too exalted for the hour, nor pandering in a single note to the vicious taste of the vulgar, as musicians named honourable have often abased themselves to do. The hostess, who was charmed to see that no one looked dull, though there had been no dancing, waited impatiently till the third song was ended, and Rodomant refused to play any more accompaniments lest the songstress should be fatigued, and then went up to him, and very imprudently asked him to play by himself. To her horror, and everyone's surprise, except Lady Delucy's, he

scowled, turned his back upon her, and ran, rather than walked out of the room. Lady Delucy, as soon as she could speak without laughing, made her most graceful apology for his behaviour, and took all blame to herself, because she had informed no one of his assurance to her beforehand, that he would do as he had done, if requested by any person except herself, to play. The apology, received ungracefully enough, at least had the effect of making all persons talk, so that no dulness returned upon the room, not to mention the renewed sparkle of suspicion in many brilliant eyes. The most brilliant eyes of all, however, sparkled with their own light only; those eyes belonged to the rose of all the seasons. She had no time nor patience for suspicion on such a hackneyed subject as the eccentricity of Lady Delucy, but the only passion she possessed even in counterfeit, was a more than Athenian mania for whatever happened to be new—except, and a somewhat wide exception, too, in Art—her absolute ignorance of which was in twin proportion to her absolute indifference to it.

Tims Scrannel, who always talked to her when he met her—not going after her, for she always

alighted, butterfly-like, at his elbow—took care to avoid the slightest collision with artistic subjects in his discourses; his tact made such avoidance easy, and his great talents provided him with topics for every taste. That he admired this Helen Jordan very much, was evident—that she liked him to admire her, more so; and silly as she was, there was between them a kind of pact, that she would help him in discoveries that he was unusually dull, and she unusually capable in making. Just as half-wits, persons of incomplete mental development, and uneducated servants, make the most sentient somnambules, so this foolish beauty had a sort of instinct which led her to divine secrets, and ineloquent as were her means of speech, she could worm from the innocent truths which they had sworn to bury with their bodies in the grave, unguessed. This same evening she had fluttered to Tims Scrannel, which whipper-in looked crosser and more crabbed than ever, and arching her brows at his face, had said,—

"I will bet you anything,"—the all-seasoned rose talked slang wherever it could be brought in. "I will bet you anything that I know what you are thinking of."

"You would be too modest to confess," and he snarled a smile. "You have never spoken to me to-night," he added.

"I have had no time, my ears ache with the dinning repetition of 'who wrote Virgilia?' and my tongue aches with protesting I do not know. *You*, too, have been wondering, I know, but you would not ask lest any one should say, '*He* does not know.'"

"I confess, alone to you, I cannot find out, and I want you to help me. My conscience will not suffer me to review a book, especially one so low in standard as a novel, without knowing at least, who its author is; whether an immature, or an experienced person, man or woman — all should be considered first."

"Suppose I cannot find out, this time."

"It will be your first failure, and *my* faith will not allow that you can fail."

"Nor mine; but I must have time—how long will you give me?"

"Six weeks, or two months at the farthest; we shall then see how the other papers take it up."

"Secure that, you can cast it down in face of them all, except the *Times*."

"The *Times* will not dare to speak till I have spoken."

Lady Delucy had not yet read this book; she read few novels, having too refined a taste and too fixed habits of study. But while Geraldi was talking to Geraldine in Italian, having drawn her aside, just after Rodomant had left the room, Albany came to his friend, and asked her as a favour to him, to read it. She promised in the fewest words, and then seriously addressed him on the subject of Geraldine's changed appearance. She knew much of illness, if little of disease, and she was very impressive with him in urging him to obtain advice for Geraldine. But Diamid, who the least of all her charms, cared for her mere youthful bloom, and who had been pale himself and thin his whole life long, could not interpret those signs, but as the natural and necessary consequence of perfected intellectual development, and intensified spiritual existence—these truly were so clearly marked in Geraldine, that it was scarcely surprising they disguised from him her actual suffering. He remarked, also, that she slept well, he was a watcher himself, and had known none but nervous nights ever since he remembered anything—he knew

not that she procured sleep with the most stealthy and dangerous of narcotics, which indeed her physical condition, untampered with by doctors and uncharged with drugs, enabled her to absorb with equal facility as an excitant or a sedative. Her various Italian reading, wholly unsuited to a child, had taught her many things which she had better not have known, the occult "little" knowledge which is so dangerous; and to execute her least desire in secret, she had a slave, Geraldi, who would have procured her poison if she had required it, on the sole condition that he might swallow it with her.

The longer and more earnestly, maternally, Lady Delucy talked, the more determined seemed her listener to treat the subject of their discourse as a supposititious evil. In fact, as she soon saw with sorrow, he adored so blindly, willingly, that he could not, because he would not, see the truth, and this excessive passion alarmed her as well as saddened. So unselfish was she, that she dwelt not on the fact to which a delicate woman must be most sensitive, that this blind worship, this fixed idolatry, was as far beyond what he had professed or shown to her, as the unfailing star-shine is above the fading flower-gleam. She only

trembled for the victims, both, of a love which so absorbed each for the other that there blent not in their married hearts one yearning after a higher union, that eternal embrace which, for the pure, a parting must precede. Still her memory of her own devotion, single love, and self-appointed loneliness, may have mingled its own melancholy with the melancholy of her present thoughts. When she was going home alone, she mused still on the past till the present was a dream, and the future seemed annihilated, not to come—a frame in which we seem at a stand-still; who has not experienced it? Arrived at home, she found her house in darkness; she asked for her daughter—Elisabeth had gone to bed, so said the man who enquired of her maid; it was true that Elisabeth had sent the maid away, but only that she might have time to write an "appendix" to her volume of foreign post. Lady Delucy was still downstairs, when one of the servants, advancing humbly, but pale with some mysterious fright, said under his voice, and peeping all around as he spoke,—"the German gentleman is here, and he said he was not to go till he had seen your ladyship—he has been here these two hours."

In fact, Rodomant had gone straight to her house instead of to his own lodgings—where then was his pride? Alas, there is only *one* power stronger in the mind of man, and that she knew. This fact surprised and perplexed her, but did not make her afraid, as it did her household, who now more than ever convicted, clung to the fact of his insanity, and held as far aloof as possible. She went upstairs, quietly, wearily, little fit for any kind of spiritual or mental conflict, yet ready to meet whatever encountered her courage or her will. He rose on seeing her, and bowed. She hoped for a moment he had but waited to say good-night, and held out her hand, with farewell on her lips, which melted unbreathed between them, however; for he advanced quickly, looking full into her eyes with an expression—sweet, entreating, but imperious—an expression which made her fear. Far rather would she have met the furtive glow of madness, smouldering to quick eruption, than that fine, living fire which burned without consuming.

An ordinary mind impassioned excites an interest which none of its medium moods could rouse, but in the passion of genius there is some-

thing awful; we are affected by it even in its errant and earthly frames; we weep over its sins as over the woes of ordinary men. Here, the soul as yet was pure, the temper of the being keen, untarnished. The lady, whose single, pure, and yet passing preference for one man, had given her discrimination which otherwise her great personal reserve would have denied her, understood every phase of passion, from the new or invisible, and the crescent, ever expanding, to the full-orbed and irrepressible, raining down its glory on every thing and being, base or beautiful —but all transfigured in the loveliness of the one. But she had yet to learn that, for some rare natures, the dawn of passion is as the Oriental sunrise—there is no perceptible twilight; the sun flames up suddenly, his fire pure, his heaven undefiled by mist—so sudden, vivid, was the rising of this passion on her perception. No marvel that from its power her gentle nature shrank.

"I shall not go yet," he said, with perfect respect in his manner, yet in a voice which just betrayed the light sharp tone of audacity which a powerful mind adopts when passion is excited. Where a small mind would cringe and fawn,

that perhaps as exaggeratedly expands. "I shall not go yet, and you are very ungrateful, lady, to wish to send me away—for you do; I read that in your eyes—and I have to sing your song; you could forget that. You have heard nothing to-night so sweet, so loving, so exquisitely beautiful. But I can sing it best at night, or early, early morning. It will soon be day, and the birds will wake, and, perhaps, I then shall be afraid. But now the world sleeps, and while it lets you alone, your heart left to itself, will listen for what I shall make it hear."

"Sing then," said the lady. "Sing your song once, and then I must leave you, for I am tired, and so should you be, and *are*, though, at your age, fatigue disguises itself in excitement, which is more tempting than sleep. Sing now, and I will listen, but not to one word afterwards."

"Perhaps you will not send me away, when you have heard. Here is your song, and when I am dead, it will still wear the crown of songs, and go hand in hand with your name for ever."

"Poor Rodomant," she thought; "names on title-pages are waste words on waste-paper with the mob. How simple!"

Slowly and reluctantly he left her side, still

turning his head towards her. He sat down languidly. He scarcely brushed the keys with the chords of the symphony. But the voice rose, as if to break all barriers down, to quell all reason, to quench despair—strong, shrill, yet painfully sweet from the strict correctness of the ear. It made the hearer "thrill with woefulness."

In gardens where the languid roses keep
Perpetual sweetness for the hearts that smile,
Perpetual sadness for the hearts that weep,
Lonely, unseen I wander, to beguile
The day that only shines to show thee bright,
The night whose stars burn wan beside thy light.
Adelaída!

Adelaída! all the birds are singing
Low, as thou passest, where in leaves they lie;
With timid chirp unto their soft mates clinging,
They greet that presence without which they die—
Die, even with nature's universal heart,
When thou, her queen, dost in thy pride depart.
Adelaída!

Depart! and dim her beauty evermore—
Go, from the shivering leaves and lily flowers,
That, white as saints on the eternal shore,
Stand wavering, beckoning, in the moony bowers;
Beckon me on where their moist feet are laid
In the dark mould, fast by the alder shade.
Adelaída!

Adelaída! 'tis the Grave or Love
Must fight for this great first, last mastery.
I feed in faith on spicy gales above,
Where all along that blue, unchanging sky
Thy name is traced—its sweetness never fails
To sound in streams of peace, in spicy gales.
Adelaída!

Adelaída! woe is me, woe, woe!
Not only in the sky, in starry gold,
I see thy name—where peaceful rivers flow,
Not only hear its sweetness manifold;
On every white and purple flower 'tis written
Its echo every aspen-quake hath smitten.
Adelaída!

Go farther! let me leave thee! I depart,—
Who whispered I would linger by thy side?
Who said it beat so warm, my feeble heart?
Who told, I dared to claim thee as my bride?
Who cried, I roamed without thee all the day
And clasp'd thee in my dreams?—away, away!
Adelaída!

I die, but thou shalt live; in the loud noon
Thy feet shall crush the long grass o'er my head,
Not rudely, rudely—gently, gently, soon
Shall tread me heavier down in that dark bed,
And thou shalt know not on whose head they pass,
Those silent hands, whose frozen heart!—Alas,
Adelaída!

He rose and approached her. Surely, his own despair must have been carried out of him in the

despair of the last verse, or that triumphant brightness could not have been kindled on his countenance. Appalled, but with unerring impulse, the lady held out both her hands. That gesture of queenly calm, and the intense gaze of her serene eyes, which showed neither emotion nor encouragement, kept him back, but abashed him not—he was yet too pure to be abashed. Only a dread desolation, one cold and rigid, covered his features so lately relaxed and brilliant with hope that was too childishly like certainty.

"It is a beautiful song," said the lady, in very distinct tones, "but not written for anyone in particular; it is a poet's song, and adaptive. I have known the words all my life, or rather its form in German, but I never heard them really interpreted till now. Again, I say, it is a poet's song."

"Adaptive! not written for anyone in particular!" he exclaimed, in tones of scorn that annihilated weakness. "You will kill me, then!" But, could death have power upon the strength that vitalised those accents? He trembled, but it seemed rather with indignation than with sorrow. "I am to die, then, before my time."

"To live long, honoured and famous, and

perhaps loved. But not now *that*, not yet. You have not suffered enough, and perhaps your pride will never allow you to suffer enough, to deserve *that* blessing."

"From *you* such words! So much for women; they are all alike, except in face and form. You profess to care nothing for the world, yet you are worldly, for you will not give up the many for the one. You pretend to think meanly of those who cannot feel—yet the one who feels the most you despise. I alone could make you happy—for I alone should love you as you deserve. You are not happy,—I have watched you, you are on the contrary miserable, miserable in your complete and wilful loneliness."

That it was his first, forced and premature bloom of passion, she knew well. Nothing else is so rash, inconsequent, so involuntary a seizure of the faculties—therein blends the sublime and the absurd, will and whim are then confused. In ordinary cases, this is the time of schoolboy and schoolgirl sentiment, born of fancy and fed on folly—the time of valentines and moonshine vows, the stretching of spell-emprisoned childhood towards youth—for common natures their only ideal time—for the ideal their only vulgar experi-

ence. Had this case been an ordinary one, Lady Delucy would have had little mercy for the subject of it—she had but lectured him soundly, and forbidden him her presence. But so gentle, so generous, was her sympathy with genius, that she longed to turn its first disappointment to its permanent advantage. She was far too generous for displeasure, too gentle for annoyance—perhaps too proud—but not with earthly pride, for she did not dwell a single instant on the difference between their social ranks. Had *his* pride, whether earthly or spiritual, sufficed to bear him in a whirlwind from her presence, she had not needed to explain her deprecation of his assumptive mood. But his pride, far from being too little, was too great to suffer him to go, to allow himself vanquished; he yet remained, and daringly, vividly regarded her.

"I will tell you something," she said, averting her eyes from those that searched her face. "I will tell you something of myself, because I perceive that it would be utterly useless to dwell on the fact, in which I believe, and you do not, that you are but anticipating your future hopes and happiness in an uneasy, troubled dream. The more I spoke of *you*, the less you would respect

me—you might think me a hypocrite and worldly, too, but nothing could convince you I am speaking the truth from my heart, and that I long to leave this world entirely—long as I only long besides, for Heaven. Listen, then, to what I say. Should not a woman be faithful to her love, as to her duty? I have loved once, and do love still, and the person I love is out of my reach for ever."

"I do not believe that the lord your husband, of whom you speak with such stern reverence, ever made you love him."

"I do not speak of him *now*; but from gratitude, not from 'stern reverence'—for it was very sweet though sad—from gratitude to him I would not marry another. This was a vow, made before Heaven; I kept it, and will keep it. I kept it in the hour of temptation."

"What was your temptation?" for her voice died away.

"What was it?"—more than impatiently—"When the only one I ever loved offered me his affection and a home with him, I refused them both. How can I accept or dream of yours? If I loved none other, my vow would bind me; loving another, I am doubly bound. Now, having said this of myself, what I never

breathed before, even in my prayers to God, you will listen to a word about yourself. It would not be for your good, present or future, nor for your happiness even *now*, though you are too young to know that—nor would your genius ever find its wings, so burdened—burdened with one who could only give you friendship."

"Who is the man you love?" he broke in, inattentive the instant she returned to *his* position, and in a voice so loud and clear, that she trembled lest the servants should be at hand—she knew that some of them, at least, were up. He paced the room, swifter and swifter grew his strides, at last he came to her again, and stood still rigidly, his eyes flashing at shorter and shorter intervals, like the lightnings of a storm that gathers.

"I implore you, do not ask me," she pleaded, in a voice that might have touched any heart, so passionate and plaintive was it. It had upon the soul in its storm, no more power than music on the thunder of the clouds. On the contrary, her tender trouble excited and determined him more wildly still.

"I will not go till you have told me, I will know his name. If you tell me not, I shall *know*

that you are false, that you invented the tale to be rid of me because you think me poor, beneath you ;—because you would be ashamed."

" Hush ! hush !" she cried, for she really heard steps — her daughter's—outside the door ; for Elisabeth, who had not been to bed herself, had been first amazed by the distant sound of singing at that hour in the morning, and then more decidedly puzzled by her mother's non-appearance after that sound had ceased. The lady joined her hands, half wrung them. " My daughter is outside, she will come in—what could she think? Consider for yourself, if not for me, and go, there is another door."

But Rodomant went to the door outside which steps were heard, and bolted it—returned to her. Her courage gave way beneath his will and her own fear. She lost her pride for one dread moment, or lost its consciousness—it swooned. What could it matter, if he knew ?—besides, lawless as he professed himself, she had entire faith in his natural honour and nobility. Again and again he urged her, for he marked well her relenting weakness.

" Some one you saw to-night—last night," she murmured.

"That will not do," he stamped—imperiously he added, "there was not one my equal there."

"I never said he was your equal—I do not care for *you*," she answered, the swoon spent and the pride awakening half-delirious. "It is Diamid Albany, and will that make you wiser? I think not, for how should such as you know him?" She opened the door—the *other* door, of which she had spoken, threw it wide; then, just then, there was a low knock which she knew to be Elisabeth's, at the door which he had bolted. To this door she flew, unbolted it without a sound, and opened it—Elisabeth entered—he was fairly driven forth, for he disliked her, a fact her mother knew. He did not even bow, but turned and fled. Yet his ear, piercingly and painfully sensitive, caught their mutual greeting.

"I am glad you came," said the lady, "for he has been singing his own songs, and it is always difficult to dismiss him then."

"Mamma, you spoil him," said Elisabeth. He heard no more, that was enough, he did not see the glance the daughter cast upon the mother, half-amazed and half-distrusting, nor the expression that overcast the mother's face, half sad, half shamed. We pity the woman who marries very

early, without a strong preference of her own for him she marries. For, in such case, she may have too much of girlhood to hide from a daughter of her own.

And that strange nature, did it wince beneath the first stroke of the rod of discipline? Rodomant hardened his heart for awhile, by icing over its fountains with cold disdain, beneath whose crust slept self-contempt, its surges spell-bound now, but sure to swell up in bitter waters as soon as the first warm influence or kindly breath should melt the ice. Such a nature expects all it thinks it deserves, when new to life. Probably it deserves as much as it desires; but do the great, the good, ever receive their full deserts in this short life? Do any? saving only those, unenvied by all who love and who aspire, who have their portion in and of this life only. From the gates of the grave falls the shadow of Sin's retribution upon this earth; often before the unworthy and erring reach actual death, they walk in that deeper gloom. But the retribution of the pure who suffer no mortal eye shall see, those black portals shut in the light ineffable; not till they are opened can the glory embrace, which shall thenceforth sustain their souls.

CHAPTER XIII.

In ordinary—even in extraordinary instances—a first disappointment of sincere, if presumptuous hopes, results in a temporary abandonment of the soul to what, in its best moods, it would despise. Lady Delucy was too sagacious to fear such a reaction in this case, which interested her. Just as the inferior minds sink below their own level, condescend to indulgence which degrades them; a great mind and noble nature will rise above the circumstances they could not control; they may require excitement, must seek occupation to charm time, but it is a higher excitement they need, and they find it in a loftier employ. As Rodomant's disdain melted, his pride revived; self-contempt surged awhile, but pride, so much the stronger, calmed that, too, and left him

(beside himself) nothing but the honest, if haughty purpose to repay his benefactress the uttermost farthing he was actually indebted to her, and then go free. She, who as a woman, failed to comprehend his masculine nature, however she sympathised with him as an artist, was extremely afraid of seeing him again, that he would come rushing in next day, audacious as usual, and then evermore defiant. When the next day passed without his eccentric apparition, she rejoiced with trembling—that day brought no Rodomant—the next, woman-like, she was half-curious, and half-relenting; not towards his designs and desires, but towards himself. On the fourth day she sent for his mother, whom she wished to take into the country with her, that she might superintend, under her own eye, the large trousseau for her daughter—not a quarter yet completed. Her messenger was baffled, both the mother and son had left their lodging, and its keeper knew not whither they had gone. So Lady Delucy went to her sweet country home, and, in a few days, received a large parcel of finished work, together with a dutiful note from her Moravian, containing an address, to which fresh materials were to be sent—an

address to a shop, none other; nor was any mention made of her son, who had frightened her into secrecy on his account.

Lady Delucy looked anxiously for Geraldine, the moment she arrived at Northeden. But though she sent her the kindest of easy invitations, on finding her actually at her bower of a house with her husband, no Geraldine appeared, though *he* made a very short visit without her, and mentioned the fatigue after her journey from town in excuse for her non-appearance. Lady Delucy felt puzzled and pained—she felt certain Geraldine was ill, and she would fain have aided her with her tenderest maternal cares. As for Diamid, passing a mother's tenderness was his; still he was also puzzled, if not also pained. For her depression seemed to deepen, and a singular reserve veiled from him awhile her heart. His temper remained unroused, where scarcely any man's would have preserved its calm, and he philosophically attributed her manner to a proud desire to conceal the utmost irritability of suspense. For a book produced at the end of a season in town, however likely to be read for that very reason out of town, still stands a chance of remaining long uncriticised; then reviewers

are rusticating, and editors act by proxy. It seemed so in this case, for none had appeared a month after the book was out.

Now Geraldine had never desired to see her family since her marriage. Certainly, she had only been married a year, but she had during that time received and refused many invitations to her father's house. Now that all public business was suspended awhile, Lord Chevening, her father, wanted to see Diamid, his pet political colleague, to enjoy communion and sympathy with him on the prophecies and probabilities of the next session. He had written to him, and Geraldine's mother had written to her—bidding them to Hope Park. Diamid resolved not to mention his own invitation, till Geraldine should speak or give some hint of hers; to his surprise she told him of it immediately, and expressed her wish to go. In fact, though she did not know it, she began, having too soon been satisfied with joy, to feel the longing for excitement, which is the most dangerous moral symptom that can affect human nature.

To Hope Park they went. It was a curious and sufficiently exciting change of scene for a girl who had seen nothing of English character,

for, say what one will, there is no life—no social development of life, which reveals character so clearly as a mixed company, gathered at a country house or palace. There fashionable persons unbend, and behave as though they had dropped a set of manacles and shackles, and could not be merry enough in revenge. There wise persons do foolish things, men and women are boys and girls; above all, parents who condemn themselves in town to what the best of them must feel is an unnatural state of separation from their children, do see their babes all day, play with them, perhaps even condescend to devote themselves to their delight and improvement; above all, there one sees the worst and best of every character, for we defy any, even the most ruthless misanthropist, to enact the hypocrite in the bosom of a home whose hospitalities extend a home to many—whatever its defects—sacred, and felt to be so by all but the utterly perverted.

The hostess of Hope Park was especially charming, for the Italian blood of Geraldine's mother gave its own rare and courtly sweetness to her manners, still easier, if somewhat graver, than those of her adopted country. Though not

passionately attached to her daughter, as she was to her husband, she still loved her with a romantic feeling very peculiar to some mothers both of Italy and southern France. Indeed, no one in this climate would give them credit for half the feeling they possess, because it is so usual for them to part with their daughters to the bosom of the church. But we believe, that much of what passes for superstition in their characters is real, though childishly simple, faith; even ignorant, still to be respected as sincere; and that, under such circumstances, they suffer more than they can show or dare confess. Just so had Geraldine's mother parted with her to her grandmother—as she would have parted with her to a religious house; so that she had, as it were, to make her child's acquaintance under conditions so new to Geraldine, that it was much more difficult than it would have been in Italy. For when her parents had visited her there, her mother, at least, had relapsed into perfect Italian life; now Geraldine had to become perfectly English, and found she could not do it. And as before, she had never confided in her mother, from having been too young to have anything to confide, so now her secrets were too

great in her esteem, and too burdensome to be revealed at all, even if she could have put them into words. Perhaps had she possessed the sweetest of all a woman's secrets, sympathy might at once have been established between the mother and the child, soon to be one also, but this was not the case. Therefore, though the mother remarked, as did the father also, that Geraldine had greatly altered, though she tried to question her about her health when they were alone, she could not advance one degree on those grounds. Geraldine repelled every suggestion of her illness, laughed the possibility to scorn, and finally succeeded in convincing her mother that change of climate alone had made her thin and pale.

Certainly, odd persons may be met sometimes at the houses of high-born persons. These odd persons one would not meet at houses of the middle or aspiring orders, who cannot afford to compromise themselves by inviting them, any more than barristers dare entertain attorneys; or merchants, retailers; or bankers, stock brokers; or physicians, chemists. So it happened, that Helen Jordan, the rose of all the seasons, found herself at Hope Park, making one among its bright, refined, autumnal company. This person,

girl as she looked, and more than woman fully grown, as she was, had certainly been a beauty, faultless so far as the perfection of external beauty went; she still preserved her colour in perfection, but it was like petrified bloom, the hard gem instead of the soft flower; or like a porcelain painting that catches without arresting the eye. Why she had never married was a secret she kept, or perhaps there was no secret, and she but counterfeited reserve as to her reasons, that she might excite belief in such a secret; sacred ever be such even when most sad. It was certain she had had many offers of marriage in her early days, for she was a person it was popular to have been refused by, and young men actually boasted of such rejection. She was brilliant enough to have enchained men who were very young, and had small store of wisdom or experience; but the older and wiser—who had perhaps bought their experience dearly—were ever on the watch to warn their younger brethren against her—detestable certificate for a woman to have graved of her on many memories—against her hollow-heartedness, her self-exposition, unredeemed by sentiment or wit, her frivolity that was never gay, her flirtations that

had no romance. Be it also taken into consideration, that her father was dimly recorded in the annals of social remembrance as a celebrated auctioneer, while it was forgotten entirely that her grandfather had been a dealer in second-hand furniture, and that her father had so well provided for her, that even in the society to which she occasionally attained, her fortune could not be counted insignificant. The greatest mystery about her was that she was received by noble and refined persons as their guest, but these are often too indolent, sometimes too good-natured, and amiably well-bred, to cast a stone at anyone whom chance—or one of their own class—has thrust in their way—much less to thrust such a one out of it. It had happened to Helen Jordan, when very young, that she had taken the fancy of an ancient baron's widow, very rich, and a great miser, who now and then invited Helen's father to dinner when she was quite alone, to reward him for having triumphantly rid her of a dark and ill-drained mansion, with the extra disadvantage of a reputation for being haunted. At one of these intensely slow dinners, the old dame complained of her reader—that was, a lean and unlettered lady's maid, whom her mis-

tress employed to read the *Times* to her every day, and so to save her eyes, on which she piqued herself as not requiring spectacles. Jordan ventured to insinuate that his daughter read admirably, and would be too much honoured to be allowed to spend her whole mornings in doing nothing else; and the dame, having discovered that his daughter was his only incumbrance, graciously consented to try her services—hinting at no remuneration, of course, conscious and tender, perhaps, of the suggestor's pride. Helen went, dressed like a Bath belle of sixty years ago, enrapturing the dowager by such a concession to her tastes, for she herself wore the costume of her girlhood. Helen took a high stand at first, talked familiarly, sang to the guitar, at which she looked so charming that her prettiness overcame the poverty of her voice, and at length routed the old lady into excitement which she had never exhibited for any living thing. As Helen calashed herself for her sedan—concession the second—the dame besought her to come and read to her, making the request as fawningly as Helen could desire. As a very great favour, it was granted.

Helen knew not whether she could spare the

time, but, at least, would try for a week; and for a week she went regularly, reading the whole of the *Times* through daily, in a voice inherited from her father, whose sonorous stage-trick delivery was half the secret of his success in his calling. After that week Helen stayed away her week, thereby enhancing her own value twofold, and the old lady despairing how to do without her, sent her a beautiful bracelet and a note in her own handwriting—she who had not even signed her own name for twenty years. Other presents followed the bracelet, which had been followed by a solitary reading; also at length, having attained the precise ideal of appreciation she chose to enjoy, it became a habit with Helen to make a second home of the dowager's town-house. She read and re-read Sir Charles Grandison and Clarissa, Pamela, and all Fielding and Smollett, the Spectator, and Evelina, all the old Bath Chronicles, and tales appended to antique fashion-books—in short, the wisest and the silliest specimens of the literature of days before she was born, or thought of; and which, on her own account, she endured with a magnanimity worthier of a loftier cause.

Next, Helen took the old lady, as it were out

of her own hands, maligned her maid to her, brushed and dressed the wigs, and arranged the toupees and turbans with which she scared the fluent graces of the modern drawing-room. She yielded at last, and Helen received her reward, a reward in proportion to her deserts. But not for a long time; the dowager never forgot that she was, as she would have elegantly expressed it, a noblewoman, and was inexorable in not taking Helen with her into public, nor inviting her to her own house, unless she was alone, during the rest of her father's life. After he died, the old lady behaved as though he had never been, and Helen became to her as a daughter. She did all but introduce her at Court, that she never hinted at, nor did Helen dare to hint, and with all personal advantages, she never could persuade anyone to present her. Everywhere else she went, forced her partners into acquaintances, and her acquaintances into friends, according to her ideas of friendship; still the all-seasoned rose might have never chanced to find herself at Hope Park,—the loftiest altitude at which she had ever displayed her bloom—but for the fact that the dowager's great-nephew and heir was one of Lord Cheve-

ning's official hobbyhorses, and, while he stayed at Hope Park, his aunt was invited for a week, on purpose to show him attention, and, she carried Helen, now indispensable, along with her. And so now, men of sage and solemn repute, or of refined and fashionable precedence, diverted themselves with this enduring flower—now, because they esteemed that *she* had no right to look for matrimonial chances—though such men would not have cast a glance upon her in her younger and fresher days; we cannot call them innocent.

There are, doubtless, many worldly persons who are of passionate natures, and such often take us by surprise; they seem inconsistent; startle us by moods of melancholy, pathetic tones chime through their careless speeches, their eyes seem to swim in dreams sometimes, even in the scenes of gaiety where they choose and delight to mingle. Such persons interest us, feeling so redeems vulgarity, and ever so slight a touch of truth for the moment scatters vanity like the sun an earth-drawn mist. But this Helen had no such moods; no such tones thwarted softly her hard, clear voice, her rudely-ringing laughter; no such dreams bedewed her bright, brown eyes,

ruthless as a rainless heaven of brass—the eyes of dogs have more fondness, those of birds more soul. She was sure to get on in the world, sure to last her time, not wither before it. Like such persons in general, she detested what she had not, feeling displayed or repressed: she despised passion in the pure, she derided the love of the self-sacrificing. Did anyone choose solitude?—it was because such a one was incapable of shining in society? Did a woman remain unmarried?—it was because she could not marry, if she would. It may be added, that to this same Helen Jordan, Geraldine, the instant she encountered her by introduction, took an inveterate dislike. She remembered her face at the party at the publisher's, where to her she had not been introduced, and recollected also that hearing on that occasion she was a beauty, she had disliked her then. For whatever, and how great soever, were Geraldine's faults, she was most true, and as far as her knowledge went, sincere.

Geraldi had remained in town; no inducements, nor the gentlest of Geraldine's devices to persuade, had influenced him on this occasion. She was surprised at his readiness to part from her for so long a time—perhaps he was surprised

himself, but like obstinate persons who have led up to a certain time an aimless life, he clung to a design, the first he had ever formed and whose tissue was yet almost traceless as a dream, with a limpet-like tenacity. Geraldine, not knowing he had a design at all, was, as has been said, surprised; but she little expected to feel any want of him in his absence, nor did she discover till then that there was a certain place in her heart, a tiny secret corner, which belonged to him alone. The first hint of this imperious blood-sympathy betrayed itself in the fact, that though when he had asked her to write to him, she had consented only out of kindness for his lonely life, yet she actually wrote her first letter to gratify herself more than him. For in perfect wifely love there is ever a sweet awe which prevents familiarity,—not confidence, which implies that mutual secrets belong to both as one; not communion, which involves a spiritual mystery indissoluble—but familiarity; and this assertion, however startling, is fact, whether or not received as truth. Else why in countless cases, where courtship promised blissfully, and nuptial hours were ideal and sacred even for the prosaic and the literal, does the bloom wear so soon from the mutual being? why

so slowly, surely, does the delicate hallucination that each is the best and brightest of all who breathe, melt from the rugged edge of hard reality? why drop the soft courtesies, one by one, like blossoms, leaving crude, hollow forms for fruit? whither vanishes the gentleness that was as breeding to the lowly-born, and which invested natural polish with a purity as far beyond its own as the star is more precious than its reflex in a frozen stream?

Then Geraldine, besides her awe, which was the shadow on her deep nature of her lofty worship, and besides her ideality, which made so mystical her love, was sufficiently self-appreciative to determine that her husband should ever believe her faultless, should continue to give her credit for strength of character as well as genius. Strength of character she had not yet—to the most ideal natures it comes not naturally, it is the guerdon of suffering and discipline's experience only. Faults she had, and the greatest of them might be more severely named—she lived for herself alone—yea, even where she loved; for to her the power of loving was given in its highest and fullest development; whose gratification is an ecstasy, whose satisfaction is Heaven bestowed

as a gift—not won. Even since Geraldine's despondent frame had settled over her like a cloudy change of weather, she knew, she felt, that she had lost no ground with Diamid, whose generosity to those he loved, nay, to those he could not love, was even an unjust bounty. His young wife's melancholy was a mood of genius—as such to be tenderly indulged, not pitied but sympathised with; petted, not medicated as it deserved—a morbid mental condition augury of moral disease. But, perhaps, Geraldine would have found it impossible to preserve her credit intact with her husband, had it not been for the free outlet granted to her faults and frailties through her correspondence with one as faulty, if not as frail; for Geraldi erred throngh the strength of his character, and his godless reliance thereupon. Geraldine could bear to pour out her mock wrongs and fancied woes to one she knew to be no better than herself. Besides, to Geraldi she wrote in Italian, a very dangerous medium for an imaginative and undisciplined nature to communicate its impressions through, nor did Geraldi's answers correct them, nor tend to cool, though they rather consolidated what should have been blown away with one contemptuous breath. But Dis-

cipline and Suffering—the Substance hard as millstone, on which the proud heart must be broken before it can be healed for ever, and the Shadow which is darker than the Shadow of Death; were both at hand: and was not this shadow the phantom of that substance, the reflex which proved the reality?

Two of those letters from Geraldi she had received and answered; on the first day of certain races Geraldine received his third, and had no time to answer it, as she had done the others, by return of post. There was a party after the races, and nobody went to bed till broad day, Geraldine among the rest. But she had a constitution not yet conventionalised, and could never lie late in the morning, even when she had been late at night. Nor had she since sleeping in the sweet country air, desired nor taken opiates; thus it was that, having rested for one hour without sleeping, she rose to write, Diamid not waking to perceive her departure, for he was seasoned so that he could either sleep far into the day, or sleep all day and wake all night—if needful, go without sleep altogether.

CHAPTER XIV.

GERALDINE wrote her letter, and laid it on the hall-table to be posted, then went into the garden, but presently returned, following a servant whom she saw with the letter-bag and a box in his hands. The box and bag were placed in the library; Geraldine, who, as her father's only child, did exactly as she pleased with his privileges—opened the bag, and found a letter from Geraldi, who, as he expressed it, could not bear his existence if he did not write to her every day. This letter, more bitter, more impetuous, and more unreasonable than ever, dejected her more deeply; before she had been spiritless enough. Then she saw newspapers, weekly and daily, she dared not open them—not

that anyone would have suspected her of looking for reviews, but she was too intensely conscious not to believe they would. The box was corded—she dared not even open that, for by its label she was made aware that it came from a certain London library, and contained all the new books of the hour. Was hers there? She might not look—she must wait—how long it seemed—to know. Again she went out into the air, but too proud to bear that the servants should glance upon her face, touched, perchance, with the trouble of her thoughts, she avoided the garden altogether, and crept by a side-path into a field of unmown grass, whose every green spire was gleaming with grey moisture, and whose every buttercup held a broad head of gold-reflecting dew. Wandering amidst them, while again she read and re-read Geraldi's letter, not only her silken stockings were drenched, but her white dress clung to her with wet; and while unconsciously she enjoyed the cool and freshness, her burning hands and brilliant lips made both most dangerous—in themselves so natural and sweet.

At last the loud clanging of the first breakfast-bell swung across the meadows. Geraldine

turned at its first stroke, and ran to the house. Instinctively she avoided Diamid—she knew he would be so hurt at her self-exposure, and also, though not as instinctively, her maid—for she was too proud to let a servant comment, even in her own mind, upon imprudence. She changed her own dress, hastily, feverishly, for now her hands were dry as well as hot, and where the coolness of the dew had sunk now throbbed a glowing warmth, intense to pain. She went down warily, yet trembling, and a slight, very slight, sensation oppressed her breathing, as though the air were thick with steam, or a hand intangible lay heavy on her chest.

All but one of the guests were down to breakfast—was it not the second day of the races? and with them was not everyone pre-occupied, except Geraldine and her husband? Even Lord Chevening only cracked the seals and glanced at the signatures of his letters—all others were crammed into everybody's pockets. But of the event on the turf the day before, the papers would surely speak, and they were all torn open, three or four pairs of eyes scanning each column at once. As for the box of books, it was

thrown on a chair between two gentlemen, and no one mentioned it, nor meddled with it, for a time. But lo! when breakfast was half through, there entered Helen Jordan (who had not been missed) in all the bravery of her race-dress, short habit, silver buttons each large as half-a-crown, hat and feathers, and bugle-sparkling fall; little stout boots, and slender whip, handle crowned with a closed parasol no larger than a sunflower, one hand on the hip, the other gauntletted all ready. A mechanical salute of her and her charms passed round the table, but not even the courteous Lady Chevening suggested that Helen would be cooler if she took off her hat till the necessary moment of putting it on; no one cared whether Helen was warm or cool. Seeing, however, that the only vacant chair had been filled by the book-box, several gentlemen rose, leisurely enough, to fetch another—they were so long about it, that Helen lifted up the box, and took that chair herself before the knights returned, each with a chair in his hand, upon which she spitefully rallied them, and with which they retreated awkwardly enough—for bold or spiteful women have it in their power to shame into momentary awkwardness even the

most graceful and gallant of men. Next Helen examined the box—she read the label—"Mudie;" she observed—"is it allowable to open it?" to Lady Chevening.

"Certainly," was the reply of the hostess, who never opened such boxes herself.

So Helen ordered the knight at her left to cut the cord, remarking in his face, as a reward, "I am not clever, but I can never rest till I know what the clever people have got to say for themselves. What a bore," as she tossed out the triads of romance-tomes—"it must be to write what it is such a bore to read!" In fact, Helen, who had not forgotten the promise to Tims Scrannel, on the principle that one good turn deserves another, and who fully expected an equivalent for her trouble, was longing to know whether "Virgilia," of which there was not a purchased copy in the house of the unconscious father of the writer, was in the box.

From the lips of the foul fiend, breathed through burning mists, Geraldine would rather have heard her first-born's darling name, than from those carnation-coloured ones which dead gallantry had often christened the ruby bow of Cupid. Helen pelted the inoffensive title at every-

body's ears, "Virgilia, Virgilia—brava, Virgilia, at last!—that odd, horrid book, which came out at the end of the season. Who's read it?"

"I," and "I," said two, in such a tone as they would have used if asked whether they took tea or coffee.

"Well," said a third, as insignificantly, "I have not read it, only looked at it; it is scarcely worth skimming."

"Is it a love story?" asked a young man.

Helen answered him by opening the first volume in the middle, and beginning in her intolerable stage drawl, a sentence—one of those at the climax of a scene, the crisis of a revealed idea—which had sounded to Geraldine as she wrote it, as beautiful as her own thought.

"What awful stuff!" said Helen.

And *she* made it sound so. Listen to a subject, nay, a phrase of a Beethoven sonata from the fingers of a Chopinist—is it intelligible? Listen to a line of Shelley droned from the throat of a Carlyle pessimist. To those who ridicule, without wit, the ridiculous *is* the sublime. Helen flashed the leaves rudely over, read another scene, in a louder and distincter drawl,—one of those scenes of passion which should, if read at all, be

inly pondered, never read aloud—true to nature, and which none but those true to nature can bear to hear. Geraldine, just as she could not control her feelings in writing, could not perfectly control her face, particularly now that she was weak; at the back of her neck there tingled a thrill, whose nervous evidence she was not physiologist enough to recognize; it seemed to unbalance her from head to foot, as a passing thundercloud unbalances one of strong electrical affinities. A terror dropped upon her like a leaden shroud, that still pressed heaviest, most lead-like, where the phantom-weight had fallen round her heart, creeping to its centre now, and over all her breast. As her whole face whitened except her lips, their dull, dry crimson seemed to redden darker, the fever shade which is itself as fire. The anonymous she had only adopted to please her husband; *then* she had wished for all to know her name; now she writhed with fear lest that last, light veil should be rent from her unclothed spirit. Just as she dared not look at him, he dared not look at her. Little, indeed, had he foredreaded that one of those bold women who, thank God, are as rare as the very refined, would be the first exponent of poor Geraldine's luckless genius.

Helen Jordan read quickly with her eye, and between her fits of brazen trumpeting she glanced greedily up and down the columns—beautiful clear type—as honour to Geraldine's publisher *his* types always are. So Helen caught the clue of the book, and realised the style—for it had a style, whether good or bad. It struck her as it might not have struck a wiser and fuller brain, that there was a singular but actual similitude between the style and that of Diamid Albany. For Helen, in past times, before the brand of her father's calling had been wiped from her brow by the shame-effacing noble — scarcely potent less than royal touch—had been wont to study the world romances of Albany, and to prime herself with them for society. Now this likeness to his style in Geraldine's was not a fancied one; it existed, and so strongly that it would have been a marvel *he* had not perceived and feared it, except for the fact that his own style was so perfectly unstudied, his own art in word-expression so innate and unconsciously self-developed, that he really did not know he had one. And Geraldine's style was as unstudied; but unconsciously had she imitated the only English writing which her memory had absorbed; the ideas still her *own*, and her mind's thoughts such as had never

been winged from *his*; it was but like the mellow mantle which fell on the rainbow palettes of the master-pupils of certain master-painters — no mimicry, but a memorial, rich and radiant, of those who first showed them that Art's iris is itself as Heaven's, divine.

Now, where wise persons suspect and are silent, the foolish are convinced, and speak—they overreach themselves. Helen, the instant she perceived the likeness to Albany's in the style of the volume she was vulgarising, darted upon the certainty that he had actually written it. This certainty inspired her with racier impudence; it would be so delicious to expose him to Scrannel's delicate and deliberate vivisection. So she ended her reading with a boisterous rendering of the most original and the purest utterance in the book—a startling, but positively true, assertion about the affinities, sympathetic and antipathetic —of Sex. Then she looked up, and threw down the book with a triumphant bang, laughed her own overpowering English laugh, everyone else laughed, but no one so loud, no woman ever laughed so loud as she, nor ever will. Every one laughed, that is to say even Albany relaxed as much towards the sound of one as he was ever known

to do; perhaps he had never been *heard* to laugh before. And Geraldine smiled into a cough, which might have passed for laughter but for the wild quiver of the smile: and that quiver caught Helen's eye; the sensitiveness she despised in any creature that did her, as she thought, good service—only wifely sensitiveness could have so sicklied the exquisitely lovely smile which was one of Geraldine's pure fascinations. So Helen was doubly sure—she saucily stared upon Albany. "This book is by an admirer of yours," she said: "it is like a very poor imitation of your 'Lotus Valley.'"

"Indeed!" said he, distantly, and stretched his hand for the nearest newspaper. He little cared, just then, if every one thought it actually his own book.

"Here," said Lord Chevening, fluttering the magazine he held himself—"happens to be a notice of the book Miss Jordan has been so good as to instruct us from, and from which I regret to say, I at least have learned nothing."

"Let me see it," said Albany, quaintly, humoring with a curled lip the notion of his own concern therewith.

"On condition that you read it aloud," ex-

claimed Miss Jordan, who flattered herself his self-sensitiveness would so betray him.

"Read it, Diamid," said Geraldine's voice;—she had pre-conceived it calm, at her own command, or never had she spoken. Now she shuddered at its unfamiliar sound, for its natural music had collapsed into the tone of a snapped harpstring. Diamid loved too much, feared too much for her he loved, to shudder, or betray the least emotion: he began coldly, inexpressively, almost tauntingly, to read. When Geraldine had asked him—to his drear surprise—it was because a sudden hope had blossomed in her heart, blossomed like all the minor ecstacies of the imaginative, of instantaneous impulse. A first review! She was wise enough to know that the judgments of those about the table were the rash, vague verdicts of the foolish, whose opinions like too many of their virtues, are "written in the water." And, thought Geraldine, excitedly, now should their laughter be derided, their poor scorn scattered by the just award of unbiassed approbation. They might all soon hear and tremble. No such thing! the review was just like such articles in general: its mark a patent, and useless for those who needed it, as nearly all patents are. It said

the same it would have said of any other book, foisted upon common sense the same platitudes that have insulted human intelligence ever since criticism became a craft instead of an art. Not a word of definite praise, nor decided blame; not an attempt at analysis, no pondering interest over a possible design, no credit given for feeling, however exaggerated, nor for aspiration, how weak soever in its flight;—but instead of advice, inuendo; and instead of suggestion, silence.

Perhaps Geraldine would not have experienced the stunning re-action which befell her, but for the fact that her health was actually deranged. But every one who understands the temperament —ideal-sanguine—of the ever so slightly consumptive, knows that any excitement, which quickens the heart's action, is far more to be shunned and dreaded than the withering hectic, or wasting hemorrhage—because it is the forerunner of both. And that still voice, with its weight of chilling words, brought the re-action —the fever-fire leaping to the cheeks, the wild weak flutter of the heart against the side, no longer as the moth within the glass, but as the bird between the bruising bars. And the intangible hand of suffocation pressed heavier on

the whole defenceless bosom; Geraldine knew that if she remained there—within the cruel charm of those cold circling eyes, with that still voice that seemed to ice the words to chillier calm, she should give one of those gasping screams which had been new to her of late, when she was over-hurried or fatigued. She left the room, nothing following her save some twenty levelled glances, and Helen Jordan's perfect self-congratulation that now her question was settled —Albany had written the book.

And there sat Albany, steadily turning the leaves of the magazine, reading here and there a phrase or two aloud, seeming to read whole pages for himself—not looking up, nor raising one wistful eyebrow, nor changing colour—he dared not follow her, after whom everything but his bodily presence and his will had flown. Had he followed he would not have found her then, for she had locked herself into her own room. She had scarcely reached it, before the relief came with deadly danger, danger she dreamed not of—she burst a vessel in the lungs. An instinct told her that Diamid would be alarmed at the symptom, while it alarmed not her. And at this crisis it was well for her that, when a very little

child, she had now and then spit blood, on which occasions her grandmother in Italy had given her copious draughts of lime or lemon juice, which had never failed to cure her. She rang the bell, then waited at the door for the maid, not allowing her a glimpse of her face, but bidding her bring some lemons, which Geraldine took in at the door, again locking it. The delicious juice, not only for the time annihilated the exhausting symptom, but with its pure acid and ineffable fragrance, lent refreshment and revival such as only Nature's medicines yield. But with them came the restlessness of recovered partial strength —that is, power to move—she could bear to lie down no longer, and longed for a full rush of air; besides, she feared to remain long enough from the company to excite remark, or question, which Diamid might ask, determined for an answer. Looking out from a gallery-window, she saw that a gay group had gathered already on the sunny lawn, but the long terrace raised above the lawn was empty; there she went, and there the east wind—ever in England companion to the hottest sun—revelled from end to end, in so strong a current, that Geraldine was obliged to hold by the balustrade lest it should sweep her

down the steps. As dreamy natures do, in painless suffering, she closed her eyes, so that she did not see, and her sense of hearing being less acute than usual, she did not hear a person approach her with stealthy rapid steps—not Diamid, who unfortunately had not left the house, hoping every moment that Geraldine would return to the breakfast-room—not Diamid, but Helen Jordan. No one joined her, when perceiving with the rest, Geraldine standing above, she had announced her intention of going to enquire whether she was ill, for no other person would have dared; Geraldine had made no friends among her father's English guests, and they were all refined, perhaps as proud as she, themselves, however, as arbiters, foolish and unconsciously impertinent.

Upon the east wind broke that brazen voice, not—"Are you ill?" "Are you weary?" not "Are you not likely to take cold without a bonnet?"—nothing to prepare her to smooth the way to the audacious question. Miss Jordan knew how much easier it was to startle and shock, than to woo or magnetise, the truth out of a loving nature, caring to conceal it.

Miss Jordan simply said, "I have your secret,

and a noble one it is, worth a wife's preserving. Pray, preserve it always, for I fancy I only know it, and it is safe with me."

Opening her closed eyes, and half-closed ears, unable to realise, to comprehend, scared rather than startled, Geraldine stood before that worst of woman's foes, another woman set against her. Soon she was made to understand, it was not in Helen to torment by halves. But well as it is for a wife to preserve such a secret, a wife would have done better to have prevented its existence. "Oh, Lady Geraldine, it bears evident marks of his having over-written himself. Great geniuses ought to die young, or if they live they should never write after forty—the mind by that time has run to seed. But perhaps he never told you he meant to write it, and you only discovered his authorship, as I did, by instinct. Yet I cannot help fancying you coaxed him—did you not?—a young wife, too, might succeed, for he is old enough to be your father. Why, I remember him when I first came out, all those years ago—*then* in the meridian of his renown. And, because you have been educated abroad, you don't know, however much his party—a small square party enough, too—may puff him in the House of

Commons, yet as an author, he has been, rather than is, and the reprints of his books are only read by those mechanics and agriculturists, whom the Radicals are trying to elevate. It is a great pity, and I feel very much for you—I saw how distressed you were."

The effect which worldly persons have undeniably upon persons perfectly unworldly, is a physiological phenomenon, which none can account for, and which few *see*, as the latter class are a very small minority. Place an unworldly nature of whatever faults, face to face with one its compeer in nobility and freedom, and it will expand, exult, show all its moods of sympathy or grace. But upon a nature so unworldly, a person who does really care for the things of this world only, has an influence, saddening while depressing; it is certain, at such moments, that the superior is for the time at the mercy of the inferior—it is the dust-crawling serpent which fascinates the free-winged bird of air. As Geraldine gathered, word after word, the fulness of the insolent meaning, her last care for her own secret vanished; in her own eyes she sank contemptible, and fit to be despised by others. But he, her husband, rose to her ideal of him, dilated to a

majesty of perfection which age after age should cover with many crowns, not her *love* so felt, so prophesied; *then* had her secret remained safe, but her *ambition*, which after all was for him, not herself, and which she had gratified in exposing herself to publicity for his sake. And so, in a moment of what men, perhaps even her husband, would have called weakness, but which was really the noblest strength of woman, she fiercely, tragically exclaimed:—

"*I* wrote the book, not Diamid. Ask him, if you will, and if he denies it, I will swear."

Martyrdom—self-sacrifice! those who shriek at a flame-singe of their little finger-end, and who eat winter strawberries in the faces of the little children who cry for bread, *believe* in ye the best. The martyr sees his own image in no clear self-contemplation, he does but contemplate the light beyond the veil of fire; the saint, whose life is but one long sigh, never listens to its echo, for there is no pause in pain to make one heard. Helen really thought that Geraldine had taken what she childishly conceived to be her husband's disgrace upon herself; she did give her credit for taking it, at the same time that she despised her. To torment Diamid the more, she went to find

To torment Diamid the more, she went to find him, utterly undaunted by his breeding or his fame, or his certainly exalted political position, not to mention that he had never noticed her by word or look. She found him, as she expected, in the breakfast room, at the window which did not look to the terrace.

"Lady Geraldine Albany has been confiding to me the secret of her authorship," said Helen, quite as composedly, nay, condescendingly, as though she had been her namesake who fired Troy. Albany only answered, "All that a married woman has belongs to her husband, you know." But he went to look for Geraldine in the garden, knowing Miss Jordan had been there. Espying her still on the wind-swept terrace, with the sun burning on her uncovered hair, he ran to her up the steps. Unhappily for her—for him—he adored consistency of intellectual character, and, without firm volition, he even mistrusted genius. There was not only disappointment, but disapproval in his face—he uttered the first, the last found no voice, but by a more subtle medium it penetrated her heart. She felt she had done no harm; her pride poured strength through all

her veins. So when he said, "My Geraldine, how could you tell that woman?" she answered, not meekly, but without her wonted wifely reverence, "I had the right."

Helen Jordan wrote a charming letter by that night's post, to her valued friend, Tims Scrannel.

CHAPTER XV.

GERALDI, by blood-sympathy, was as miserable and well nigh as physically depressed that morning as his cousin. For some time past, too, a still more literal annoyance than the causes distressing her, had drugged life very bitterly for the haughty boy. For, whatever were Geraldine's mental sufferings, at which the majority of persons would have sneered as consequent upon morbid self-indulgence and intellectual luxury, she was spared one torment which is inconceivable, inappreciable, by any who have not struggled with it, or endured it—worldly care—the fact of *positive*, not *negative*, poverty or dependence. Certainly, Geraldi had been poor in Italy, but he had not felt it painfully, partly because it was his

own family who supported him, and partly because in that land poverty is delicately unacknowledged as a misfortune, tacitly and tenderly assisted or pitied, never dreamed of as a fault or a disgrace, as it is esteemed and held in this nation of shopkeepers, where, whoever may choose to contradict it, the fact remains, and the poor know it and believe it; though, perhaps, for that very reason, they will not subscribe to it. Certainly, Geraldi had been still dependent on Geraldine, when he came to England, but he depended no longer on her alone, so he felt, and he had not foreseen how it would affect him to be indebted to one in whose veins not a drop of his own blood mingled. Most delicately and generously had Albany endeavoured to make Geraldi at home in his house, but had found it impossible to please him, so difficult was he to control or satisfy, and at last the man upon whose head and hands affairs pressed heavily, was forced to fall back on a habit of polite courtesy which had no special suggestiveness, but which Geraldi chose to interpret into a cool dislike and unexpressed desire to be rid of him. Then followed the most harassing and humiliating conviction that can befall a proud mind, one which might irritate

and harshen the sweetest of tempers—which Geraldi's was not. As soon as ever he imbibed enough knowledge of the English tongue—very soon, too, for he was as intelligent as he was idle, he discovered by words what he had half-suspected through signs, that the English servants knew and disdained his poverty and dependence. How knew they he was poor and dependent? Servants find out everything, particularly in London. They would seem to have a sixth sense, such as some old naturalist ascribed to bats. They are aware when husbands and wives differ, who, the world believes, agree, yea, though they wrangle in a whisper within closed double-doors. They know the daughter's real preference among all the young men who come to the house, long before papa and mamma suspect or forbid. They know the haunts of the sons whose mothers are so happy in their minds at the steadiness and home-clustering affections of those youths, and they also know what tradesmen the sons toadey to prevent their dunning. They know the exact state of family finance, when the domestic economy is retrenched, and why—when the purse brims over with precious droppings, and the last coin at the attenuated end cannot chink for

want of a companion. A king of writers has written, with deep sarcastic pathos all his own, of the skeleton closet. The lord of the house may keep the key of that closet in his breast, but his servants possess its duplicate.

No wonder, therefore, the servants found out Geraldi's poverty and position in the house—a position for which they would not have exchanged their own. And during the whole time he had been in town, he had practised himself—even to think—in English, having a futile impression that by so doing he should enable himself to loose his own bands: not to leave Geraldine, for rather than leave her, he would have endured the scorn and impertinence of every servant in London, but to become rich and exhibit his riches in the eyes of those to whom wealth is worth. His ideas were sufficiently innocent in their ignorance, though all had vanity for their parent; of course when he knew English well enough to write it, he should write books like Geraldine, for boys of all countries think they can do what girls do, better than the latter. And, of course, he calculated on success double that he expected her to attain.

But happily for his real success, these poor

ghosts of literary projects were scattered in the morning sunlight of his first intellectual excitement. To Diamid Albany, who had written some fine plays himself, Lady Delucy had sent the transcript into Italian of the tragedy of Alarcos, anxious for his infallible verdict upon the rendering. Albany glanced through it, and then gave it to Geraldine with a tender, spousal compliment on her superior acquaintance with the language of the translation. Geraldi, jealous of all their mutual confidences, small as well as great, and who was ever on the watch to detect symptoms of sympathetic secrecy in his own presence, took the translation sheet by sheet to read, as Geraldine finished each and laid it on the table. Such a character as Geraldi, happily a rare one, is the only kind of character for which the absorption of such a dramatic narrative is dangerous. To such a one the moral has no meaning, the meaning is centred in the intense crisis of the plot. Precedent is a guarantee for the rights of the passions; they are strong, and therefore are to make way and conquer. And Geraldi was no coward physically; not the guillotine would have shaken the equilibrium of his nerves. He *could* have slain himself, like Alarcos; have let his own captive

spirit go free through the unknown after death, for the chance of meeting Geraldine's spirit there The terrible and sombre beauty of the poem was as soothing to his atrabilious nature as a handful of fresh roses to the pure in heart. Geraldine, charmed to perceive that anything interested him, found it easy to persuade him to go with her and her husband to the first performance of Alarcos, and, having been there, he went to all the rest, still admiring infinitely more the acting than the music, and envying every actor in his turn. No one will deny that it is easier to find a genius modest, even over-modest, than a person of good talents even moderately so. Geraldi felt quite certain he could be an actor, the first of actors, and the first of singers too. Then his nobility, as an actor, would be untarnished, nay, ennobled further. He knew the story of a certain Sicilian count, and also how rich he had made himself—immeasurably rich in Geraldi's estimate, for Geraldine, during a drive, had pointed out to him the really splendid villa-residence of this same masked grandee. So this new idea, which seemed to his vanity a project quite feasible, just as it was proper to his pride, incited him to go into company with Geraldine, though he had

declared he never would. It was on the occasion already mentioned, when they were to see the composer of Alarcos as an opera, and Geraldi had no idea of consulting anyone else — commanding anyone else, we should have said, for he esteemed himself as an individual far above the composer. So he had written the scrap of a note, which he thrust into the hand of Rodomant, who had not thrust it back to him.

Geraldi, though actually a poor person, was not actually without money, for as it has been said, if one will not work, one must accept, beg, borrow, or steal. Only the first of these alternatives was obligatory in Geraldi's case, because of Geraldine's simple generosity; she thought no more of giving him money than of spending it herself. It was once a week or so, "Geraldi, don't you want some money? I am sure you must, darling! I have spent all I had in *my* purse." Then she would pull his out of his pocket and fill it, or if she found no purse there, fill her own and put that into his pocket, and add another to her heap of portemonnaies that very day. Geraldi felt as though it were no degradation to receive money from her, quite ignorant of the English laws on the subject of a wife's property; he felt it was

hers, and so proper for him, her blood, to accept, though he would have perished before he touched a farthing from Albany's hand. But he did not spend this money; from the moment he had determined to enfranchise himself socially, he had set it aside religiously, with a growing interest, worthy of a miser or a millionaire.

Before Geraldine had left town, she had offered him more than she had ever done before, and he had refused it, exhibiting his privily-hoarded store with a kind of grim glee, for he considered such a store all-sufficient for every emergency even of an art career. So positively refusing, Geraldine could not make him take any more money, for his will was as much stronger than hers as his intellect was weaker, and she left him, inly wondering herself how he had contrived to save it, when she had spent twice as much in the same time—not on her dress, for that was ever simple, but in buying the costliest and most charming presents for Diamid, such as could be of no possible use to such a man, or, indeed, a man at all, and in throwing away coin on every crowd of beggars, or single beggar, that beset her carriage, and whom her servants dared not drive away for fear of receiving their discharge—for

by all servants who had ever lived with him, Albany was literally idolised, a rather singular tribute to the goodness of heart of one whose development, whose breeding, and intellectual perfectness, were utterly above their comprehension. Before she left Geraldi, however, Geraldine charged him to let her know when he wanted money, adding "I shall not tell Diamid, because you are foolish, and fancy he does not like you, but you don't mind asking *me* for anything; I would take anything from *you*." This was balm to Geraldi, he felt as though he and she had a secret between them which her husband could not share.

In his note to Rodomant, Geraldi had touched his taste by employing the fewest words, "I am miserable, unfortunate, and proud. I am Italian, and I wish to go upon the stage. I wish to learn of the composer of Alarcos, who alone can teach such as I. I should like to act Alarcos, may I come to see you?"

Still perhaps, had Rodomant received the note by post, or from another hand than the writer's, he would have tossed it behind the fire, and waited till a second appeal, attesting persistency and earnestness, should be made. But the

strong admire the strong, the proud have ready sympathy for the proud, and, dare we write it? man is readier, more instant to help men, than to help women; except in cases which only prove the rule. Many a good man, with average intelligence, will watch like a woman by the sick bed of a male friend, ply him with assiduous, if awkward, attentions, and beguile with never-ending chat his convalescence;—when, woe to that man's wife, if she lies half an hour on the sofa, or lifts her hand to her throbbing head in his presence; woe to her, for he oppresses—"he shall rule over her."

When Rodomant read the note, he decided on replying to it directly, and sent his answer by his mother's hand, for Geraldi had given no address, merely his name. "Come," said the answer, "to this direction, but tell no one where I am, or I will do nothing for you, and burn this bit of paper." Geraldi, next day, went. He was astonished to find the composer of Alarcos in so mean a room, but the surprise was quenched in sympathy when Rodomant said, "Young man, you stare at my poor room, learn to look at the inhabitant of it, as God beholds the soul through the body which it dwells in. I am in debt to the

generosity of the noblest nature in this or any country, and I cannot rest, nor cease to hoard and scrape—nor die, till the debt is discharged. Therefore you perceive, my allowing you to take up ever so small a portion of my time, is charity."

Geraldi understood this speech, and was not made angry by the beginning and the end of it, solely because he had, unconsciously, one point in common with the speaker. Artless as was the boy, and perfect in art the man in years so few the older, they each longed supremely for one thing—not the same—and both were determined to obtain it at any price. Geraldi nursed dark thoughts in his breast, Rodomant only bright ones; but each had made a compact with his own soul to feed those thoughts on hope and faith till the consummation of desire should crown existence.

In spite of Geraldi's ignorance of German, which he would neither bear to hear, nor would endure to learn, he and Rodomant, after wonderfully brief practice, understood each other well. The latter had the facility, peculiar to the finest musical organisations, as well as to those of the genius linguist, of acquiring by acute

ear, and unfailing memory, a rapid conversational, if non-grammatical, knowledge of any new language, the sweeter and more melodious the easier, of course. Besides, his necessary intimacy with the Italian text of operas served him well, and Geraldi's beautiful Tuscan accent helped him further.

Though he said, before trying Geraldi's voice, "You are to sing to me to gain, if you deserve it, a certificate; I am no actor, and by an actor you must be trained;" yet when he had heard it, he added, "No one else would take the trouble to cultivate your voice, of which there is very little, though it is very good; nor is it yet ripe. School-culture would ruin it and its prospects, I shall tone and mature it—that is your only chance. You have a person for an actor, therefore it matters the less about your voice, so long as the most is made of what there is. But I shall not teach you unless you do exactly as I order you; no one must know you come, or I should have them all coming; nor must you make a fool of yourself, and boast you know me, or I will never see you again. You must take me when I can trouble myself about you; if I am busy you must wait, if I am out, stop till I

return, for your time is of no value, and mine is more precious than gold."

Geraldi approved of this treatment, and as for the gipsy style in which the refined being dwelt, nothing suited his vagrant tastes so well, so after a day or two he almost always lived in the artist's attic, from ten at morning, till ten at night, eating his bread and olives, or a mess of maccaroni, paid for and cooked by himself, while Rodomant swallowed his handful of oat-meal biscuit, and the coffee, which was his only luxury, for each cup of which he counted a certain number of beans, and which tasted like coffee served up to an Arab chief.

Geraldine had not time to miss Geraldi during these expeditions, for he did not take one until the day she left London, and he said nothing of them in his letters. He certainly found that his master gave him enough to do, and this was a happy circumstance in more respects than one for him, that constant occupation, and his strong, if unconscionable, love for his cousin, preserving for him his boyhood green amidst temptations which are the most tremendous peril to the purity and promise of his age. He had to work all day, for Rodomant seeing him well in health, and

wholly unimpaired in nervous energy, had no compunction in so filling up his time: his actual lessons always short, but ever infinitely suggestive, were also few; for the master, if he worked the pupil, worked himself thrice as hard, as only a proud person braced by gratitude can work.

Geraldi had been living this life, intense for the brain, and wholesomely dietetic for the heart, just three weeks, which had passed like months, when he received Geraldine's wildest, saddest, and most complaining letter, her answer to his received the morning of her self-betrayal. She had taken two days to write it, days of weakness and mental self-exaltation, the slight inward delirium of a secret fever. She had poured out the whole melancholy of her determined desolation, the heart's blood of her lacerated pride. More and more unpardonable —*unless* she had actually lost the reins of her mind, which was not the case, seeing that she could write with complete coherence—she told Geraldi her husband's mild remonstrance, so gently uttered, but of which she contrived to convey a harsh impression, even cold. And Geraldi, while he wept hot tears over the sheet, triumphed, for he thought she had at last confided

to him the secret of her unhappiness in her marriage; that possibility he had jealously persisted in till it became a fact in his faith. He was in a mood in which exultation literally brimmed over the measure of his existence for the hour; he felt as though, if he could not confide in some one, his heart must burst—a rash and ruthless mood, which can no more spend itself without an explosion than can a thundercloud.

He read and re-read the letter from morning post-time until noon, then folding it up and laying it on his heart, he rushed to his new acquaintance, breathless and panting, and made as much noise on entering the attic as an Italian can ever make. Rodomant was writing in the hot August calm—not a sigh crept through the open window to flutter his paper—not an earthly reminiscence trembled through his creative trance. He was evolving the most intellectual and imaginative form of music for a single instrument—the sonata—and for the instrument he had affected to despise as belonging of right to women. Perhaps it was for that very reason he had lately taken it to his heart; but however this might be, it was only a few weeks since he had essayed the publication of such a composition

with sudden and complete success—even though town was empty, for his publisher transmitted it to every sea-side city and country place. For as the most beautiful poetry sometimes sells in a fit, so does the most beautiful music for single interpretation, only it must be the *most* beautiful. Therefore the artist was once more free, his highest faculties refreshed by long rest, and his intellect impregnated with that most etherial of inspirations —a pure, ideal passion, which even though it shall disperse like a rose-hued mist of morning, shall have fulfilled its mission in the loveliness with which it purified the sense.

It had always irritated to extremity Rodomant's temper to prepare easy tune-fooleries for fashionable fingers; while doing so, if he was disturbed or spoken to, it had been as though a chained lion were stirred up with a whip. But writing as he pleased and approved, soothed him as oil glides over water, his humour grew compassionate and condescending; with a kind of hero-superiority he smiled on men as children. How, then, upon a youth in expectancy and unreasonableness still a child? He beneficently nodded at Geraldi, but motioned to him to wait awhile, and so Geraldi meant to do, but his condition of selfish excitement made it impossible

for him to attend even to the easy exercises in the rudiments of harmony, which Rodomant set him to do in his spare moments. Nor could Geraldi sit still, his heart boomed rather than beat in his ears, he went to the window longing for some strong wind to blow, then walked away from it and continued pacing up and down the room. Rodomant was conscious of his uneasy motions all through his own moonlight fancies, for a serene ecstatic serenade was rippling silently beneath his pen. He even spoke, his own voice never interrupted nor disturbed his own thoughts.

"What is the matter with you that you are idling the best hours of the day?" he asked, still writing, and yet listening to the still music in his brain.

Geraldi groaned. "I can't work, I can't sit down, I am miserable to madness, and so is she!"

Rodomant heard these words, and understood them in the true sense of the poet-musician, he thought Geraldi deep in some boy's dream, a sort of fragment of the same rainbow that framed his own conceptions.

"David charmed Saul when he was mad. I will play to you," said Rodomant, and went to

the piano. Wildly paced Geraldi up and down the room, while the first movement of the sonata sounded; one of stormy but sustained yearning, well answering to Geraldi's mood. But when the slow serenade, ineffably sweet, began, divinely played, for the composer was in love with its loveliness, then all at once Geraldi's heart sank, melted in the midst of him, he went up close to the instrument and laid upon it his head; he uttered a low soft cry, then burst into tears. The tribute enchanted Rodomant; and that he might be assured the emotion he saw was the effect of his playing, he asked Geraldi what was the matter? in a voice he had never used to him before. Geraldi, won like the magnetic patient by the gently-waving hand, burst forth in frantic high-toned language, which passion made poetical. Rodomant listened, playing on *his* melodious passion, the delicious under-flowing current of his consciousness, that he whom he deemed a child was ennobled by passion too. Alas! for passion, when love in its loveliest form, the self-sacrificial, is not there. Of course Rodomant heard the story—the whole story, concentrated as passion only can condense, in Geraldi's own way. Geraldine, his cousin, he adored—she

was unhappy in her marriage; and if he expressed not, he implied, what he was determined to believe, that she too loved him. Further, Geraldi implied not, but fully expressed, that she had written him a letter to tell him she was unhappy. And he tore the letter from his bosom, only did not read it, for Rodomant shook his head. Still from under his relenting fingers flowed the melodious invocation, he listened in a dream. And does not the dreamer speak in sleep sometimes? May one not question him and receive an answer? But, alas! Geraldi knew not of the slumber of the soul entranced by the enchantments of art, which *he* only sensuously perceived, and which did but excite him to selfish introspection. "Why did she marry him, if she loved you?" asked the dreamer, speaking in that sleep in which the bodily eyes are open.

"He *made* her—he was powerful, and she was ambitious, though I did not know it then, but she has shown it since. Yes, he made her marry him, she was so delicate and innocent; but she would have shown me her love had there been time. She shows it me now, too late. And he is too old for her. Everybody at his age has been in love; of course he has loved a woman who would not accept him, because she did not love him."

"It was not because she did not love him," murmured the dreamer in a low but strangely eager voice, still playing, but now more dreamily than ever, for the last few words of Geraldi had half restored consciousness of Fact, though consciousness of Time and Place still slept:—the finger drooped, soon there would be silence. At that instant, a full-grown sagacity, terrible in its strength and pain, was born within Geraldi. He had always suspected there was a mystery—this man knew it, and should tell him, but how? Would there be time? for this same new instinct told him that the speaker knew not what he uttered.

"Yes," said Geraldi, "of course she loved him; something prevented her; she was obliged to refuse. She told you too, then?" he added, with wild invention, hazarding anything to get at the truth.

"Yes, she told me *that night*—I made her tell me. But," cried Rodomant, waking full and suddenly as a sleeper when the opened shutter lets in the sunny blaze, "it was strange that she should tell a boy like you. My lady, I thought I had your secret all to myself, as well as your goodness and generosity to remember always. I am sorry, angry, that she told *you*."

"*Her* goodness—*her* generosity," thought Geraldi, who suddenly remembered that Rodomant always spoke of Lady Delucy as his benefactress—nay, Rodomant had confided to the boy the whole story of the opera. Geraldi threw his last die. "Lady Delucy did not tell me—I guessed it. Everybody must have guessed it who saw them; but you were not in England."

Geraldi, as we well know, had come to England precisely when Rodomant did, but he was certain Rodomant did not know it. The last moon-ray melted from the mood of the awakened sleeper, he exclaimed, "My lady no longer if she cannot keep a secret—only a woman like other women."

"It *is* Lady Delucy," thought Geraldi.

It is said that no secret is safe with one intoxicated. Had Lady Delucy known this?

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